

**JOURNAL OF THE
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EVANGELISM IN
THEOLOGICAL
EDUCATION**

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1990-1991**

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in Theological Education**

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David Lowes Watson

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Editorial Introduction

The approach of 1992 and the Columbus celebrations already being planned for the year are a cause for serious self-examination among Western Christians, and most especially for those of us who make evangelistic studies our professional contribution to the church. The motive and the manner of evangelizing the so-called "New World" are properly being reevaluated by historians and sociologists, Christian and otherwise, and the questions they are raising have profound implications for the ongoing task of proclaiming and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with the world.

The major article in this issue addresses such questions with theological integrity and scholarly research of a high order. Those of us who attended the meeting of the Academy for Evangelism last October at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary well remember William F. Warren's powerful presentation, and there were many requests for the opportunity to reflect further on his words in printed form. They read no less eloquently on the page than in their presentation by Professor Warren in New Orleans, and focus our attention most appropriately for the activities and remembrances of the year ahead. Priscilla Pope-Levison's book, *Evangelization from a Liberation Perspective*, reviewed on page 83, is a further welcome resource in this regard, and a much needed text for evangelism courses in general.

The next two articles focus on another theme of vital importance: the interpretation and significance of the Great Commission. Robert E. Coleman, a founding member and past president of the Academy for Evangelism, well known for his prolific and widely used writings, examines the biblical imperatives for presenting the gospel with an invitation to clear decision on the part of its hearers. This is a task of the utmost urgency that should never tire nor discourage the evangelist. From an Asian perspective, Stephen S. Kim focuses on the central dynamic of the Commission: the "burning heart" that motivated John Wesley and so many others. Receiving this inward assurance through the grace of Christ, argues Professor Kim, is the necessary prerequisite for the evangelist, who is altogether powerless without it.

The concluding article in this issue is an excerpt from a new book by the vice president of the Academy, Robert C. Anderson. Due for publication in November of this year, *Circles of Influence* is a major contribution to church leadership development, and will be invaluable for those who are concerned about congregational vitality. We are grateful to Professor Anderson and The Moody Institute in Chicago for allowing us to have this preview.

Last fall, George R. Hunsberger agreed to become Book Review Editor for the Academy. The significant contribution he will make is already reflected in the range and quality of the reviews and notes in this issue, and marks a very positive development in the life of the *Journal*. We are grateful to Professor Hunsberger for his willingness to add these responsibilities to those he already carries as secretary of the American Society of Missiology.

A number of members continue to praise the address by President Jimmy Carter to the Academy in October 1987 as a very effective teaching instrument in the classroom. Not only is it a fine example of lay participation in evangelism and an outstanding personal witness by a committed Christian disciple, but it also gets right to the heart of the ministry of evangelism as we should be practicing it in North America. Video and audio copies of the address can be obtained from the Audio-Visual Department of the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, GA 30322.

David Lowes Watson

EVANGELISM IN THE CONTEXT OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY: STRUCTURAL SIN AND STRUCTURAL CONVERSION?

William F. Warren, Jr.

Introduction¹

"I hope that you realize that this class will be on Latin American Christology, not North American or European." With that remark, Professor Saul Trinidad, of the Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano, San José, Costa Rica, introduced this writer firsthand to the current theological scene in Latin America. Although I had studied and read about Latin American Liberation Theology, until that moment I had always done so from a North American starting point, assuming that my traditional North American evangelical points of departure from which I evaluated the information was universal, at least among Evangelicals world-wide. Upon receiving the syllabus, I was further amazed by the radical difference in approach to the subject from the "normal" one (in the Western world). After a review of Christological currents of the past two centuries, the synoptic gospels were considered, all of which seemed like a logical starting point. But within the synoptics the list of themes seemed to this writer hardly related to a proper study of Christology: the Kingdom of God, the actions of Jesus as liberating events, the role of the poor in the proclamation of Jesus. The last third of the course was dedicated to such themes as "Jesus and Politics," "Jesus and Spirituality," "Jesus and Ecclesiology," and others. Although the course in no way denied the traditional Christological statements about such matters as the two natures, the virgin birth, the resurrection, and such, it radically altered the Christological agenda (at least from the perspective that this writer had upon entering the course).

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The difference in viewpoint can readily be seen in the following reformulation of the Apostle's Creed, as presented by a student at the Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano in an earlier course on Christology:

I believe and I live in God the Just One, the Liberator, who created the world and my neighbor, and in Christ of Nazareth, his only son, and my only head, who was born of a woman like my mother, suffered under the oppressor's might, was despised, marginalized, and crucified. He descended upon the mechanisms of power, staged a coup d'etat, and is in command, together with God the Just One, the Liberator. And soon, when everything is under control, he will pass judgment on rich, poor, and indifferent. I believe in the church, which lives in the world and for it, in liberation from alienation, in the equality of human beings, in the Prince of Peace, and in the new life dawning on the horizon of history. Amen.²

The topics of structural sin and structural conversion were presented in the course as the major focus for evangelism in Latin America and several students mentioned how they were seeking to apply the teachings to various social situations. Having passed several years in Latin America working both in a theological seminary and on a church field among some of the poorest of the poor, I would like to share some reflections on the theme of "Evangelism in the Context of Liberation Theology: Structural Sin and Structural Conversion."

A starting point for understanding Latin American liberation theology logically would include a look at the historical context in which the theology arose. To that end I will first give a brief and admittedly sketchy overview of that context. Following that will be an overview of the concept of evangelism in liberation theology, sections on structural sin and structural conversion, and finally the perceived challenges for evangelical and Protestant churches that arise from these concepts in liberation theology.

I. Latin American and Christianity: Past and Present

From the Spanish period during which only the Roman Catholic Church was tolerated as legal, to the era of independence when Westerners were courted by the new republics as a source of economic, social, and religious renewal and impetus, to the earlier period in this century that brought renewed tensions between Catholics and evangelicals in many countries, to the present post-Vatican II era of limited cooperation with and more

widespread acceptance of evangelicals on the part of the Roman Catholic Church (as well as vice-versa), the religious history of Latin America has been vastly different from that of the North. For the first three centuries after the coming of the Spanish to the New Land, the Spanish brand of Catholicism reigned supreme in Latin America. A proper understanding of the theology of the Spanish conquerors and the accompanying and ensuing culture is imperative to any proper analysis of the present theological scene in Central and South America.

The Christ of the Spanish Conquerors

Immediately prior to their arrival in the Americas, the Spanish had just finished a religious and political war of eight centuries with the Arab Moors. That struggle "produced a tragic concept of life, a terror of extinction, and a sin-tormented conscience. All this in turn led to a kind of 'redemptive masochism' and kindled the high passion that is a fundamental Spanish trait."³ Another result of the conflict was a virtual identification of being Spanish with being Christian as well as the logical accompanying identification of the Spanish mind set with a Christian mind set. John Mackey states that the Spanish brought Christianity under their domination to the point of "appropriating God" and making Christ a Spanish messiah who would bring honor, glory and power to Spain.⁴

And so with the conquistadors came the Spanish Christ, giving his divine approval to their actions as the means of bringing glory to his beloved Spain. The Spanish Christ was a suffering figure who had emerged from the centuries of suffering by the Spanish people. Also he was a lowly child under the care of his innocent mother. As Saul Trinidad remarks, "the historical Christ appears in only two of his aspects, and dramatically: as the helpless and harmless child, and as the humiliated and defeated victim. He was born, he died. But he never lived."⁵ The suffering Christ was a sign to the down-trodden Indians of their own fate. As the Spanish Christ knew nothing of the victory of the resurrection but only of a terrible suffering to be endured, so also the Indians, believing in such a Christ, came to accept their situation with a fatalistic submission. Suffering became a virtue, and hope was lost in this world.

Furthermore, Christ was the force behind the throne of Spain as the heavenly monarch who imparted his power to the designated figures in this world. Again citing Trinidad:

... Hence the legal jurisdiction of the pope, who as vicar of Christ is himself a monarch—over all men and women, animals, and lands, with the power to make "donations". That is, he can authorize the taking of new territories. Consequently, just as Portugal did, the king and queen of Spain, once Christopher Columbus had planted the flag of Spain and the cross of Christ in the New World, petitioned the pope for title to these new lands, arguing that their most ardent desire was the extension of the church. All acquisition of goods, whether simply by taking

possession of them or by the shedding of blood, was justified. So now Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand began to be "glorified," as "lady and mistress" and "lord and master" of these new lands. . . It was in the monarchs of this earth that Christ, as a "heavenly monarch," was considered to be manifested and revealed. First, of course, came the royal pair . . . But then there were those surrogate Ferdinands as well—the *encomenderos*, the big landowners, the colonial officials. Lords and masters. *Their* portraits, too, were framed with gold. And they had halos, just like Christ-the-rich-and-powerful. . .⁶

The resultant theology on a practical level, if not at times on an official one as well, was a Christ who demanded the obedience of the populace and their acceptance of their lot in life without questioning or seeking to change it. The rulers were seen as divinely appointed leaders with authority that was granted by Christ and therefore not subject to either criticism or challenge. Christ upheld the position of the establishment, and in fact the church often actively participated in maintaining the status quo. The prevailing theology had little to do with the historical concept of Christ. As Mackey states,

He thinks the Christ, as he sojourned westward, went to prison in Spain, while another who took his name embarked with the Spanish crusaders for the New World—a Christ who was not born in Bethlehem, but in North Africa. This Christ became naturalized in the Iberian colonies of America, while Mary's Son and Lord was little else than a stranger and sojourner in these lands, from Columbus's day to this.⁷

The Presence of Protestantism in Latin America

With the coming of independence to many of the Latin American countries in the first half of the nineteenth century, the yoke of Spanish domination began to be shed in arenas other than strictly the political one. An anti-clericism arose in many of the countries, and Western immigrants were sought as a means of promoting a positive change in the economy of the new nations. Along with the coming of the Westerners came their religions. Evangelical churches emerged to serve the needs of the immigrants. Slowly the countries opened the door further to allow the Evangelical churches to minister to the indigenous populations as well, much to the chagrin of many of the staunch Roman Catholic leaders. Schools were built by some groups and social ministries were established by others. These ministries won the approval of the people and thereby served at least to give credence to the Evangelicals. The Bible Societies also entered many of the countries, distributing the Word of God in Spanish and Portuguese. The result of the entrance of the Evangelicals was to expose many of the people to a theological option: a Christ who was pictured as still alive (resurrected) and very capable of transforming men (in-

dividuals). What Wilton Nelson notes about Central America could well be said with respect to all of Latin America: "The 'Protestant Ethic' has caused many to rise above their poverty and lack of culture."⁸ But Protestantism tended not to address the larger social issues present in Latin America.

The Emergence of Liberation Theology

In the past three decades a new theological option has surfaced in Latin America: liberation theology. Among Roman Catholics the desire to see their faith make a difference in the plight of the masses, and among Evangelicals an emphasis on "the secular, provoked, perhaps, by the lack of social concern and a pseudo-pietistic disinterest in politics on the part of many Evangelicals" provided the impetus for the new outlook.⁹

In contrast to the traditional Spanish-Catholic theology, in liberation theology Christ is seen as extremely active to aid the sufferers to overcome not only their present sufferings, but also to destroy or transform the circumstances that cause such suffering. The present ruling class, rather than being the vehicle of God's rule, is the source of the oppression, and therefore enemies of the suffering masses with whom Christ is identified in a liberating process. As can readily be observed, the resultant Christology is in direct opposition to the Spanish-Catholic Christ.¹⁰

Thus, several Christological options have presented themselves historically in Latin America. As Núñez summarizes:

For the Roman Catholics, He was the Christ nailed to the cross or shut up in His funeral casket; He was the Christ exalted to glory on the altars, but silent and immobile before the painful drama of injustice that millions of Latin Americans were living . . .

The Christ proclaimed to many of us Evangelical Christians gave the impression of being confined to the heavenly heights, from which He dealt with each of us as individuals, preparing us for our journey to glory and promising us that He would come back to the world to solve all the problems of humanity. For the present He had nothing to say about social problems; nor should we become interested in them, because our mission was only to rescue the greatest possible number of souls from the sinking boat of the world . . . [The Evangelical Christ] was still far removed from social conflicts . . .

The Christ of liberation theology has decided to break His silence of centuries in the face of the social problems of underdeveloped countries. He has decided to speak in contemporary political language. He uses expressions such as "alienation of labor" and "surplus value," imperialism and underdevelopment, exploitation and dependence, capitalism and socialism, class struggle, option on behalf of the poor,

political and violent love, liberating historical praxis. He is the Christ who uses revolutionary jargon and leads us to understand that Christian authenticity is only possible in unreserved political commitment to a leftist ideology."¹¹

Toward a Definition of Liberation Theology

In seeking to plant a theology that speaks both to and from the present situation, the focus of liberation theology is not so much on the study of the historical setting of the Bible, but rather on a contemporary analysis of society. Due to the tremendous disparity between the rich and the poor in Latin America, the class struggle analysis of Karl Marx seems to fit the situation. And so, while not necessarily accepting Marxism *per se*, his sociological analysis of reality is used as a major tool in understanding the current situation in Latin America: the formation of the future is in the hands of the majority poor class; the basic sin is more institutional than personal, and the structures of society are what need to be either redeemed or destroyed and replaced; and the materialism of Marxism is seen as consistent with the concept of the kingdom of God (which is basically political in nature, not simply spiritual), with the true coming of the kingdom (the essence of salvation) being realized by way of an in-breaking of material and social justice upon an unjust society.¹² God is on the side of the oppressed, or the poor, in this struggle for liberation, and so must the church be also; for victory is assured because of the presence of God with the poor.

This liberation is composed of three parts. It is liberation from oppression, exploitation and slavery, liberation for the construction of a more just world, and liberation with the help of Jesus, working by the side of the One who is on the side of the poor.¹³ The goal of Christianity is not simply to convert individuals, but to redeem society.

Such a view of God's salvific activity in this world of evil structures is found to be consistent with the ministry of Jesus in many ways. By his proclamation of the truth Jesus undermined the existing political and social structures; by his inclusion of the poor as a priority he undermined the social structure of the Roman empire; by his universalism he burst the Jewish situation to speak to all of history; and by his ethical teachings and servant lifestyle he laid the basis of a new humanity founded on freedom and love.

But does the Bible, and especially the New Testament, give major support to the idea of a this-world kingdom in the political, social and economic arenas of life? A look at the methodology of the liberationists will help in seeing how they can answer this question in the affirmative.

Methodology in Liberation Theology

"Not reading and speculation, but living, dying, and being condemned make a real theologian," said Luther. The Liberationists have taken up

Luther's challenge by developing their theological agenda according to the current needs in society: by emphasizing orthopraxis instead of orthodoxy. The plight of the masses in Latin America calls for action, not just theory.

Subnutrition, infant mortality, epidemics, low incomes, unemployment, the lack of social security, of hygiene, of hospitals, of schools, of housing; in one word, the phenomena of the marginalization of those goods necessary for a minimum human dignity; such are some of the indicators that characterize the real situation of immense proportions of our people. . .¹⁴

In response to such a situation Leonardo Boff notes that two types of liberation Christology have emerged: one that reacts to the situation to liberate specific cases of oppression but without attacking the root structural causes of the oppression; and another that has analyzed the root causes and is seeking to change the structural and social causes of the situation. Boff clearly comes down in favor of the second group, the one with an overall game plan for the long term liberation from foreign and internal domination.

But how does faith relate to the contemporary crisis in Latin American society? How does Christian freedom relate to political liberty? As Míguez Bonino puts it:

By what apostolic authority may we conflate liberation from sin, death, and the demonic, with liberation from injustice, oppression, and poverty? In more personal terms, how do we relate the first-century activities of Jesus and Paul with the twentieth-century activities of Che Guevara and Camilo Torres? Are they similar, repetitious, distinguishable, or unrelated?¹⁵

For liberation theology the theological agenda is set by the current situation as seen through a Marxist analysis of the problem. The biblical keys that best fit the prior social analysis are found in the exodus story for the Old Testament and in the concept of the kingdom of God in the New Testament.¹⁶ The kingdom of God is seen as a promise of a this-world salvation in the historical political realm. The other New Testament interpretations of Jesus are taken as models of how to re-interpret Jesus for other settings. For instance, Paul is seen as having taken the original Political¹⁷ message of Jesus and reinterpreted it into an anthropological framework, thus providing an example of a radical reinterpreter of Jesus and thereby giving biblical support for such types of future reinterpretations.¹⁸

The above summary by necessity is admittedly generalized but at least the outline is somewhat clear. As expected, the liberationists have not always been well received in other theological quarters, and indeed have at times even been denounced as Satanic. But aside from such evaluations, what is to be said of the ideas of social sin and social conversion that liberation theologians have put forward? Are such concepts valid? How do such concepts translate into the task of evangelism?

II. Evangelism In The Context of Liberation Theology

Evangelism has taken on new meaning for liberation theologians. Rather than fostering a negative attitude to evangelism, liberationists in Latin America have redefined the task of the church and many are actively involved in what they call evangelism. Evangelism is not an easy task for Latin American Catholic Liberationists, but is seen by them as essential. Juan Luis Segundo focuses on the need for evangelism by noting:

Every choice implies a price to be paid, but the greatest price for a Christian is to stop evangelizing. It seems to me that there is no Christian evangelization in Latin America any more . . . In Latin America the time is fast approaching when there will no longer be Christians except through evangelization. But to our great amazement we are beginning to realize that we do not know how to evangelize any longer.¹⁹

And when the Catholic Christian message is proclaimed in Latin America, all too often the long-standing ties between the church and the state bring to mind images to the hearers that are repulsive. The Roman Catholic Church has sought to uphold the status quo for so long, no matter how much in need of change the society might be, that it has lost credibility among many of the people. As Segundo notes, "in Latin America, more than elsewhere, the concern to guard Catholic institutions by every possible means has compromised the very words by which Christianity must be expressed."²⁰

A Liberationist Definition of Evangelism

In view of the need for evangelism, a liberationist concept of evangelism has evolved that remains faithful to the official stance of the Catholic Church and of at the same time incorporates liberationist theology. The Roman Catholic Church has defined evangelism in such a way that both personal and social elements are included. As Pope John Paul II said, "to evangelize means making Christ present in human life as a person and, at the same time, in the life of society."²¹

Liberationists have developed the idea of social dimensions to evangelism by redefining sin as structural sin and conversion as structural conversion. Gutierrez summarizes the resulting concept of evangelism:

Evangelization announces liberation from Christ: a total liberation that goes to the root of all injustice and exploitation; the

rupture of friendship, of love. But it doesn't mean a liberation susceptible to a 'spiritualized' interpretation, one that hangs on so stubbornly in certain Christian groups. Love and sin (that is, the denial of love) are historical realities that are experienced in concrete conditions.²²

Evangelism is a means to correct some of the wrongs of a Roman Catholic Church that often participated in and benefited from the structural sins prevalent in Latin America. The Catholic Church is to change its historical political alignment with the oppressive power structures and opt for the side of the oppressed, the poor.²³

Criticisms of Other-worldly and Privatized Concepts of Evangelism

The liberationists have criticized other views of evangelism, especially ones that incorporate an "other-world" view of Christianity to the exclusion of concern for the plight of the masses in inhumane situations, and ones that promote a "privatized faith" that denies the social implications of the gospel. North American religion and churches that have resulted from its missionary work in Latin America are the main culprits cited, and often with much validity.

Some of the more conservative North American groups have promoted a type of evangelism in Latin America that has offered the gospel as little more than a way for individuals to escape eternal damnation. Little or no emphasis has been placed on the demands of discipleship that following Jesus entails.²⁴ Undoubtedly a distorted eschatological twist to the gospel often leaves behind a doctrine of Christian living that is divorced from the realities of this world. This is not to say that all emphasis on a future hope are wrong, for the concept of the final victory of God over all forms of sin should serve as the motivator for true Christian commitment to the furthering of God's kingdom both in the individual's life and in the surrounding people and society. But evangelism that is centered only in the appeal of the next world denies the reality of life and presence of God in this world.

Evangelism that leads to a "privatized faith" that denies the social implications of the gospel is also firmly criticized by Liberationists. Privatization has proven a deceptive and formidable problem for North American churches due to the prevalence and general social acceptance of the concept in society as a whole. In describing "privatization" Stephen Hart names six phenomena that fall within the concept: 1) Churchless religion devoid of direct interpersonal relationships and social demands, such as with the electronic church; 2) Voluntary church associations that operate as businesses created to serve the self-defined ends of its members; 3) Extreme relativity in individual beliefs, where even extremist views are considered legitimate; 4) Religious subjectivity that holds that sincerity is the gauge of validity in beliefs; 5) Separation of the realm of religion from that

of the rest of life, with the result of failing to make any connection between faith and social questions; and 6) Religious marketplaces, where people shop for a church as they would for any other commodity, and churches compete for clients.²⁵

The case against a privatized faith is obvious and strong. The very nature of a triune God argues for some sense of community, as does the idea of a relationship between God and the individual.²⁶ As Migliore notes,

If the life of the triune God is defined by free self-giving love, privatism has no place in Christian hope . . . This is not to say that individuals are unimportant in the purpose of God. Rather, it is to recognize that we become fully personal only in relationship. The completion of our lives as persons involves a depth of fellowship with God and with others of which we have now only a foretaste. Opposition between the quest for personal fulfillment and concern for the liberation of all creation is alien to authentic Christian hope.²⁷

A Response

Does the gospel offer a word of hope for our present plight, for the situation of poverty, despondency, hopelessness, powerlessness, loneliness, violence, and hunger that so many experience day in and day out, or is it only a message for a better next world? Is Christianity only an anesthesia that helps a person "make it" through the present life due to the hope of not living a like life in the future, or does it speak to the here and now? Liberation theology seems to rightly insist that evangelism must not divorce the king from the kingdom. A call to accept the king automatically includes the kingdom: evangelism cannot be divorced from discipleship. The question of structural sin and structural conversion as the context for evangelism remains to be considered, but the focus on the social demands of the gospel as related to its proclamation is surely a note well struck by the Liberationists and one that needs to be heard in both the Latin American and the North American contexts.

III. The Concept of Structural/Social Sin

Does God care about the everyday existence of people? What does God think about the situations of hunger, violence and inhumane treatment to which so many are subjected? Due to the increase in structures in modern societies, complaints about insensitive bureaucracies and oppressive systems have increased. Liberation theology has sought to provide a faith answer to the problem in terms of structural sin and structural conversion.

Roots of the Concept of Structural Sin

Some of the first theological considerations of the idea of social or structural sin come from the social gospel movement of the past century. Since that time, several have sought to link the concept to that of original sin. Piet Schoonenberg is perhaps the best known for this formulation.²⁸ He interprets the Johannine phrase "sin of the world" as indicating the sinful state of the world into which all people are born. Original sin is inherent in the "situation" into which mankind enters and belongs. Schoonenberg's view is often used and seen as a starting point in the discussion of a biblical concept of social or structural sin.

The biblical evidence for the idea of social or structural sin is found mainly in implicit references, although some explicit references are apparent. The doctrine of original sin as seen implicitly in the Bible and especially in Paul's writings seems to suggest that sin rules over all with a power that is greater than any single member of Adam's seed. Sin is not simply actions but a power or mechanism that rules unredeemed humankind.²⁹ In Revelation the state is definitely seen as having become a sinful structure. The tower of Babel seems to be another clear example of structural sin. The communal results of sin in the life of Israel as well as the social conditions denounced by the prophets also support the concept of structural sin and/or social implication to the sin problem. Social sin is in many ways no more than the logical extension of the sin problem: whenever sinful people unite to build social, economic, political or whatever other type of structures, sin in some form or another will be evident in the results. And these sins will, if unchecked, grow to contaminate the structure more and more.

Contemporary models of social sin are generally built on a sociological analysis of the interplay between individuals and social structures. The structures are built by individuals, but they "become relatively independent of human choosing and play a significant role in how persons will understand and react to the world around them."³⁰

Traditional Western theologies have majored on the personal aspect of sin due to giving priority to the perpetrator of sin. Sin is defined in light of a perpetrator who is responsible and who willfully acts in defiance to God. From this vantage point "social sin necessarily derives from personal sin, since only people can willfully choose to sin." But in many modern models of social sin, the experience of sin is the starting point, in which case social and personal sins often exist independently. This second model provides the foundation for liberation theology's concept of structural sin. As can be noted, if the different starting points are taken into account, the two models are actually quite close.³¹

A Liberationist's Concept of Structural Sin

Liberation theologians see the experience of sin in their context of

poverty, exploitation and oppression, and so majoring on that experiential aspect of sin they give primary consideration to structural sin. While not denying personal sin as a reality, they reject any concept of personal sin that does not go on to contemplate the social dimensions of sin. Sin is an everyday experience in the here and now that has to be eliminated by confronting the oppressive structures of sin that are the immediate causes of the experience of sin. Boff states it as follows:

The gravity of sin lies in the fact that it constitutes a situation or structure. Also, each situation has a degree of independence and objectivity; sin is not only personal; it is primarily social and historical . . . Sins do not die with their people: they are perpetuated by the actions that survive the individuals, such as institutions, preconcepts, moral and judicial laws, cultural customs. . . Many of these things perpetuate vices, racial and moral discriminations, injustice against selected groups and classes of people.³²

One of the clearest historical examples of structural sin in North America is that of racism in the South. Racism became a way of life, a part of society. Anyone who dared to challenge the system was chastised by society, being called a "nigger lover" if white or being physically and/or legally punished if black. Even if a person wanted to disregard the system, the price exacted by society was often so high that good intentions were checked. The sins of an earlier generation outlived the propagators and became entrenched in the system that they put into motion. The personal sins had become structural sins.

A Reaction

Can structures willfully sin? No, but they can be sinful. Structural sin cannot be separated from personal sin in the final analysis, for both are intertwined so as to make clear distinctions impossible. The complexity of sin is such that even the smallest part of structures, people, are infested with it. As O'Keefe argues, "Even if one could change every unjust structure, if one did not simultaneously change the hearts of men and women they would eventually rebuild the old structures of injustice or develop new and more resilient ones." Without a doubt structures need to be built that are as in line as possible with the character of God, and the will of God for our world. But more than that is needed: each and every member of society needs a radical structural change in his/her life.

With the Marxist analysis of society and the judging of society's needs and problems based on that model, the power of sin and the definition of needs are underestimated. The reality of the terrible depths of sin surely include the problems of unjust structures, but are they limited to this on the social level? Is the problem so simple as to be able to choose sides so clearly? Yes and no. Many of the same social ills continue to exist in societies without the marked class distinctions of Latin America, and so

the problem is more complex. But on the other hand, the inhumane and oppressive realities of life in Latin America surely deserve serious Christian concern and action. Also, poverty in the biblical perspective seems to encompass more than just materialistic differences among people. Alienation from God, from others and from God's material creation all seem to be factors in the biblical emphasis on poverty, especially as seen in the New Testament.

Since in a very real sense all social structures are marred by sin, a balance must be maintained between criticism of sin in society and a proper respect for authority, government, organizations and responsibility. Participation in society will always mean that Christians will indirectly participate in structural sin. On the one hand liberation theology sounds a needed alarm about structural sin. But as O'Brien notes, whereas advocates of social sin "may warn against deifying the structures; they have to be warned against demonizing them. Both are extremes to be avoided. Some structures may be changed for good.³⁴ And as O'Keefe says, "the message of an authentic theology of social sin is only of value if it challenges and enables people to the conversion of their own lives and to the ongoing transformation of the world."³⁵

IV. The Concept of Structural/Social Conversion

In view of the idea of structural sin, does structural conversion follow? In liberation theology the answer is a resounding "Yes." The primary goal of God's action in liberation is to change this world by overthrowing the embodiments of structural sin. Does the New Testament allow for social dimensions to conversion?

That there are ethical and social implications attached to conversion in the New Testament is undeniable. Conversion is not contemplated apart from integration into the community of the people of God, the church. Along with the social context of the belonging to a new community, conversion involves ethical dimensions: conversion is contingent upon the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, whose rightful place in the believer's heart is that of supreme and unchallenged Lord, an acknowledgement that "in turn requires a life of obedience."³⁶

But while social and ethical implications to conversion are explicitly taught in the New Testament, the concept of structural conversion is nowhere explicitly taught. Because of this fact, liberationists have had to turn to the idea of conversion to the kingdom of God as a biblical basis for their concept of structural conversion.

A Liberationist's Definition of Structural Conversion

The concept of structural conversion in liberation theology focuses on the experience of characteristics derived from God's just character when

one comes into contact with the structures of society. The experience of social structures behind ungodly conditions in society call for the conversion of these structures into more just ones. The members of society can support the just structures of society in good faith because those structures have been constructed or converted to promote the well being of the masses of society. The role of the poor is that "from a liberation perspective the poor within society provide the standard to measure the justice of society and of those who live within it."³⁷

From such a vantage point salvation includes the liberating of the human and cosmic situation from any reality that is not in accord with God's plan for this world. Concerning this liberation Boff states:

In Latin America this [salvation] signifies that the effort made all over the continent to free itself from the oppressive bindings of economic, political and cultural situations, that have a million people oppressively bound in an inhumane situation, is not considered simply as a logical political imperative, but as a requirement of faith, a faith that translates into action and not a dulling drug for discontents.³⁸

The result of this perspective is that salvation is a historical project for this world that is defined as the action of God to transform not only individuals, but the whole of the human experience, even the social environment in which humankind lives. The focus on sin as the experience of its results removes most of the traditional concern for the eternal consequences of sin, and the focus on the poor as the ones who experience the brunt of the effects of sin in society avoids the question of the need to deal with the "oppressor within" or with the sin problem that plagues all of humanity, even the poor.³⁹

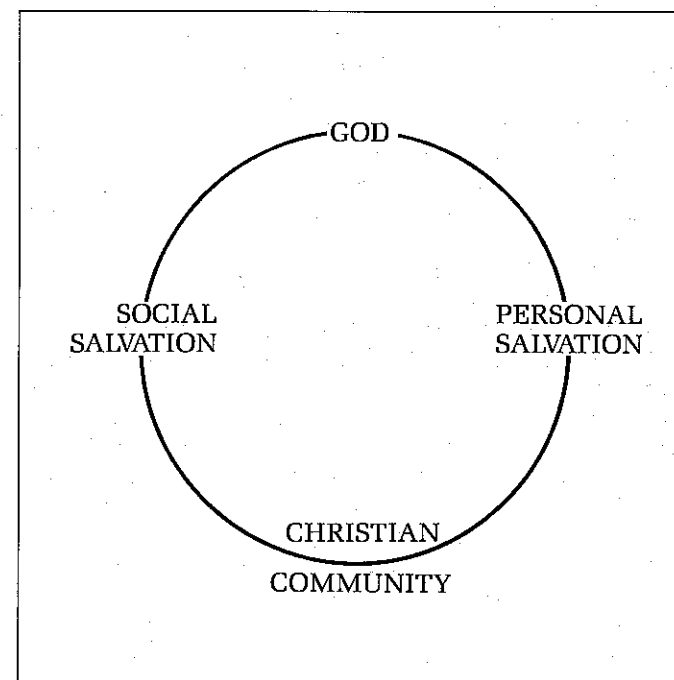
Personal and Social Conversion: How Do They Relate to One Another?

Few if any would hold that personal conversion does not have any social implications. But that being said, in what sense does it relate to the pursuit of a more just society? Personal conversion can be generalized as a radical commitment to God in Christ and the following of Christ in the path of the will of God, and not simply the acceptance of the religion of the prevailing culture or of religious dogma. In light of that, orthopraxis is as much a part of personal conversion as orthodoxy. As Karl Barth has well said:

We cannot make the conversion of man into a purely private matter, as though it were only a concern of the individual, the ordering of his own relationship to God and his neighbor, of his inward and outward life, of his own achievement of pure and essential being. It is right to emphasize its personal

character, its singularity, and the isolation in which this individual must perish as the man he was, and can and may become new . . . The biblical individual is not selfishly wrapped up in his own concerns . . . His conversion and renewal is not, therefore, an end in itself, as it has often been interpreted and represented in a far too egocentric Christianity. The man who wants to be converted only for his own sake and for himself rather than to God the Lord and to entry into the service of His cause on earth and as His witness in the cosmos, is not the whole man. When we convert and are renewed in the totality of our being, we cross the threshold of our private existence and move out into the open.⁴⁰

The call to discipleship in the Christian life seems to leave an open door for at least some idea of social implications to salvation. The existence of the church and its role in the life of believers gives a social dimension to salvation. In principle there is no dichotomy between personal faith and social transformation. God cares for the world in its entirety, including its systems and structures.⁴¹ A faith that sees only a personal side to salvation with no social dimension becomes irrelevant to the realities of life. But in what sense does personal salvation relate to social salvation? Henry Schmidt sketches an understanding of the relationship in the following diagram.⁴²



Schmidt sees the holistic approach of the gospel as including four components. The approaches of just personal salvation or just social salvation are incomplete by themselves. The community of the church provides the link between the two approaches by providing a social setting for the living out of the implications of a personal commitment to Christ and by serving as a point of reference and origin for the task of changing society. The fellowship among Christians provides a model for the living out of God's will in social setting and for the changing of wrong practices and structures that surface/exist within that fellowship.

In the context of liberation theology this model would need to be corrected by including the poor as a point of reference. However, in seeking to maintain a faithfulness to both personal conversion and social conversion in the face of both the personal and social dimensions of sin, the model seems to come as close as possible to giving a broad outline of how the two concepts (personal and social) are related. From this stance, the church gains new meaning. Giving just one example, in the Latin American context, perhaps the best modeling of democracy is that seen in many Evangelical churches, a model that can and has served as a springboard for ideas in the wider social context.

A Reaction

Due to the seriousness of sin the wider social aspects and implications of salvation need to be recognized and realized in Christianity. Sin has left its mark in all of society with the resulting situation of sinful structures and sinful forms of oppression that weigh upon each and every member of the human race. In the face of the depths of sin in the world the biblical view of salvation seems to provide not only a personal transformation in process and a motivation to work toward a better future but also a context for the realization of change among those who come in contact with God's presence including the social economic and political structures of society.

From this standpoint, structural salvation seems to be not only a worthy calling but a Christian duty.

But how is the presence of sin with the structures to be recognized and changed? At this point liberation theology seems to pay heavily for its use of a Marxist analysis of society that only contemplates the wrongs in society from the class struggle perspective. If the goal of Christianity is only the establishment of a materialistic kingdom of God in the form of a transformed society, then Marxism might be the best strategy. But the Bible seems to reject the sufficiency of not only a short-term materialistic goal, but also the overly simplified class struggle analysis of sin.⁴³ The biblical views of sin and salvation confront the reality of both sin in this world and of death, with victory assured in salvation over the power and finally the presence of sin in any and all forms that it might take.

As for the starting point in the kingdom of God, the Roman Catholic

Liberationists assume, practically if not theoretically, that in the experience of infant baptism personal conversion has already occurred.⁴⁴ Such an assumption leads to a theology that borders on universalism and that denies by default the need for personal conversion among the masses of Latin America. To be sure the Liberationists are sincere in seeking to make faith relevant to the problems of today in Latin America, but the lack of emphasis on personal conversion robs their theology of its needed base for action. Does simply identifying with the oppressed or being oppressed equal personal salvation? Do the oppressed cease to be oppressors due to their plight in a given situation? Are all people not both oppressors and the oppressed at the same time? In view of this, Núñez remarks:

If Evangelicals have fallen into an individualism that is uninterested in collective problems, liberation theologians convert salvation into a political crusade for social transformation. We would do well to maintain our emphasis on the salvation of individuals, while at the same time bringing back into focus in our ministry the social dimension of the gospel.⁴⁵

V. Challenges for Evangelicals and Protestants In the Task of Evangelism

Having examined and interacted with the concepts of structural sin and structural conversion in the context of liberation theology, a number of challenges for the Evangelical Protestant churches appear. While in no way pretending to give a comprehensive list, I venture to mention a few.

We need to incarnate in our practice, preaching and theologizing the God who is present now, in the current reality in which our world finds itself—the God who cares about people living in inhumane physical situations caused by sinful actions and inhumane structures that exist in a sin-plagued world. Social sin points out in unmistakable terms the need for reconciliation that exists in the world today. Confronted with injustice on every side—injustice that often times is supported by even the supposedly best elements of society, the very social structures that form the basis of society—the need for the message of a just God who stands ready to justify the members of society and to wage war against sin in whatever form it might present itself is as pertinent today as at any time in the past. Our message must be clear and unmistakable: God is on the side of all who suffer the oppression of sin, in whatever form it might be, and stands ready to bring liberation from that oppression to any and all who will come to Christ. God is poised to begin the process of transformation and victory over sin to those willing to join in true commitment to the divine program for mankind.

The challenge to see changed lives lead to a changed society in no way undermines the essential task of evangelism, but rather forms a vital part of the Christian proclamation. As Escobar puts it:

To complete with the social responsibility of the church it is not necessary to abandon evangelization nor to adopt a liberal or nonevangelical theology. The only thing necessary is to carry out our beliefs to their final consequences . . . The church should not adopt a political mission or program. But the testimony of service by believers has undeniable social and political dimensions. The concept of our responsibility as service will avoid the "Catholic temptation" of seeking to assume power and impose the gospel from above . . . Evangelicals respect the State and the structures that they live under, but they aren't afraid of change and don't unite the destiny of the church to the survival of any given forms of social and political organizations.⁴⁶

Liberation theology's call for praxis, especially as related to the task of structural conversion, is a needed reminder that doxology is the basis of theology: we need to worship God with committed lives as a prerequisite to a proper understanding of God. That the Marxist concept of praxis is the only valid model is not only questionable but doubtful. Praxis should be faithful to the gospel and Christ-centered, with awareness that following Jesus expresses itself in good works, making a social impact starting in the family and circle of friends and extending from there to the wider arenas of life.⁴⁷

As many Latin American Evangelical theologians have noted, our theology and practice must be mission oriented, or otherwise it will tend to accommodate itself to the social context in which we live. Latin American Catholicism bears ample witness to this truth, as liberation theologians have demonstrated. Evangelism, both on a local and a global scale, provides the vision needed to maintain vitality and relevance in faith. To the extent that evangelism is conceived in biblical terms, Christianity will be relevant to the needs of a lost world, both on a personal and structural level.

The meaning of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus are being rediscovered in Latin American liberation theology, and while we may not agree with their understanding and application of that message, the mere fact of turning anew to the historical Jesus serves as a challenge to us to look at him anew and once again have our faith revitalized and purified. What Padilla states in reference to the Evangelical church in Latin America could profitably be heard by us here in North America:

The church in Latin America urgently needs to experience the cross as far more than the cultic symbol of a privatized faith. It needs to experience it as God's victory over the powers of darkness and therefore as the basis to challenge every

dehumanizing power, be it militarism or consumerism, statism or materialism, legalism or hedonism. It needs to experience it as God's call to affirm servanthood over against coercion, love over against violence. It will then be better able to proclaim it as the means to freedom for the oppressed and the oppressors, the rich and the poor. The power of the resurrection is the power for a new lifestyle patterned on Jesus. The same power that raised him from the dead is the power that transforms sinners into neighbors willing to act in love for others. Impelled by it, Christians are able to act in response to human need—not in order to bring in the kingdom but because the kingdom has already come in Jesus of Nazareth and is yet to come in all its fullness."⁴⁸

Conclusion

If the historical situation of dependence and domination of two thirds of humanity with its 30 million annual deaths from hunger and malnutrition does not convert itself into the starting point for whatever contemporary Christian theology, even in the rich and dominating countries, that theology will not be able to situate and concretize historically its fundamental themes. Its questions will not be real questions. It will pass by the real person . . . Theology needs to be saved from its cynicism.⁴⁹

In view of the past history of theology in Latin America, a more accurate and applicable Christ needs to be presented and actualized. It is not with the themes of liberation theology nor their social concern to effectuate a lasting change in the intolerable conditions found in many places in the world today that this writer has difficulties. May other Christian groups catch that same fire in their bones to see God make a difference in their surroundings! The difficulties that this writer sees involve a methodology that starts from the present needs as the means of understanding the historical message of God in Christ; a reluctance to look beyond the materialistic plane of human existence; a continued desire to link the church to the state as a political power player (even though calling for a changed state); and a refusal to confront the true soteriological condition of the masses who continue as Roman Catholics in name, but as agnostics in practice. Liberation theology and its concepts of structural sin and conversion are not radical enough! But the question also must be planted to our theology, is it radical enough to let God burst forth in and through our lives? And in the event that our theology should be found sufficient, are we radical enough in our following of Jesus for that to happen?

NOTES

¹ The terms "structural sin" and "social sin" are used interchangeably in this paper, although a distinction may be made between them by some scholars. In liberation theology the terms are apparently interchangeable. The same remarks apply to the terms "structural conversion" and "social conversion." The term "Evangelical" is used in the Latin American sense and therefore includes almost all of the Protestant groups, especially the more conservative ones.

² José Míguez Bonino, *Faces of Jesus: Latin American Christologies*, translated by Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984), pp. 44-45.

³ *Faces of Jesus*, p. 49.

⁴ See John Mackey, *The Other Spanish Christ: A Study of the Spiritual History of Spain and South America* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), pp. 8-9, 96. This work is a must for anyone who desires to understand the background of Latin American religious thinking.

⁵ *Faces of Jesus*, p. 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁷ Mackey, *Spanish Christ*, p. 95.

⁸ Wilton M. Nelson, *Protestantism in Central America* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), p. 67. The rest of Nelson's thought is also insightful: "But added material and cultural blessings have sometimes proved what was said by the monk Caesar Heisterback (1180-1240): 'Religion brought riches and riches destroyed religion'" (p. 67).

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Many liberation theologians feel that the Latin American independence movements ended incomplete, with the simple substitution of criollos in place of the Spanish, but with no structural changes. The revolutions in France and the United States are seen as fundamentally different from the Latin ones. See Pierre Bigo, *La Iglesia y el Tercer Mundo* translated by Exequiel Rivas (Salamanca, España: Ediciones Sígueme, 1975), p. 49.

¹¹ Emilio A. Núñez C., *Liberation Theology*, translated by Paul E. Sywulka (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), pp. 236-38 passim (parenthesis mine).

¹² As R. T. France notes, current research on the concept of the kingdom of God seems to indicate that no single idea is sufficient for expressing the concepts involved, but rather a conglomerate of concepts form both the background and meaning of the term. Any identification of the kingdom as either totally earthly or totally heavenly is suspect. See R. T. France, "Liberation in the New Testament," in *The Evangelical Quarterly* 48 (1986): 3-23.

¹³ See Néstor Jaén, *Hacia una Espiritualidad de la Liberación* (Santander, España: Sal Terrae, 1987), pp. 32-38.

¹⁴ Equipo Seladoc, *Cristología en América Latina. Panorama de la Teología Latinoamericana. Vol. VI* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1984), p. 21.

¹⁵ José Míguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. xviii.

¹⁶ One of the results of this new way of doing theology is a reading of the Bible based on selected paradigms that serve as examples for the interpretation of the rest of the message. But the central paradigm in liberation theology comes not from the Bible, but from the Marxist analysis of society: class struggle.

¹⁷ In speaking of politics in the context of liberation theology, the following distinction should be noted: Politics (capital P) means "the common search for the common good, the promotion of justice and rights, the denunciation of corruption and violence to human dignity;" and politics (small p) is all the activity corresponding to the administration or transformation of society through the conquest and exercise of the power of the state . . . This does not involve the whole Church but only a part of it, namely, the laity." Leonardo Boff, *Church: Charism and Power. Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, translated by John W. Dierckmeier (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1985), pp. 27, 28.

¹⁸ See Juan Luis Segundo, *El Hombre de Hoy Ante Jesús de Nazaret*, vol. III: *Historia y Actualidad. Sinópticos y Pablo* (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1982).

¹⁹ Alfred T. Hennelly, editor, contributor and translator, *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990), p. 36.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

²² Gustavo Gutiérrez, *La Fuerza Histórica de los Pobres* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1982), pp. 28-29, translation mine.

²³ As Samuel Escobar notes, the historical political role of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America over the course of five centuries stands in sharp contrast to the small minority role of the Evangelical community during the past century and a half. Escobar notes that the social concerns of liberation theology are realities that no theology can ignore, and "the Theology of Liberation is a further stimulus to us, but in no way is it a valid alternative." W. Dayton Roberts, editor, *Liberation Thinking. An Evangelical Assessment* (Monrovia, California: MARC Publications, 1987), pp. 39-40.

²⁴ See the article by Saul Trinidad in *Cristología en América Latina*, and Daniel L. Migliore, *Called to Freedom: Liberation Theology and the Future of Christian Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), p. 101.

²⁵ Stephen Hart, "Privatization in American Religion and Society," in *Sociological Analysis* Vol. 47, (Winter 1987), pp. 320-321. Hart sees "privatization" as a long term phenomenon in North American life and traces its roots to both cultural/economic and religious causes, especially among Protestant churches due to the subjective nature of the faith experience (pp. 327-331).

²⁶ See the discussion of the Trinity as a touchstone for speaking of social implications of the gospel in Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, translated by Paul Burns (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988).

²⁷ Trinidad, *Called to Freedom*, pp. 119-120.

²⁸ See Piet Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin: A Theological View*, translated by Joseph Donceel (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965). Three other good sources for background studies on social sin are: Mark O'Keefe, *What Are They Saying about Social Sin?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990); P. T. O'Brien, "Principalities and Powers and their Relationship to Structures," in *The Reformed Theological Review*, Vol. XL, (Jan.-April, 1981), pp. 1-10; and Bernard Ramm, *Offense to Reason: A Theology of Sin* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), pp. 133-135.

²⁹ Segundo, *El Hombre de Hoy*, pp. 305-350.

³⁰ O'Keefe, *Social Sin*, p. 57.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23. O'Keefe notes that there seem to be "at least four broad possible positions of the relationship between social and personal sin. . . These four positions are: (1) social sin represents the social effects of individual personal sin; (2) social sin is the embodiment of personal sin and injustice in social structures; (3) social sin and personal sin are coessential components of a comprehensive view of sin; and (4) social sin is the primary meaning of sin of which individual, personal sin is the manifestation" (p. 17). The first and fourth models are considered extremist views, while the second and third ones are both widely held.

³² Leonardo Boff, *El Padrenuestro: la Oración de la Liberación Integral*. (Madrid: Ediciones Paulinas, 1982), p. 145 (translation mine). Peter Henriot mentions three examples of social sin: "A social structure which oppresses human dignity and stifles freedom is a sinful structure . . . A social situation which promotes and facilitates individual acts of selfishness is a sinful situation. . . A social structure or situation which is unjust also becomes sinful when one is aware of the injustice but refuses to exert efforts to change it. This is the social sin of complicity." Walter E. Conn, ed., *Conversion: Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation* (Staten Island: The Society of St. Paul, 1978), p. 319.

³³ O'Keefe, *Social Sin*, p. 3.

³⁴ O'Brien, "Principalities and Power," p. 10.

³⁵ O'Keefe, *Social Sin*, p. 98.

³⁶ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 150.

³⁷ Ismael Garcia, *Justice in Latin American Theology of Liberation* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), p. 191.

³⁸ Leonardo Boff, *Jesucristo y la Liberación del Hombre*, translated by F. Cantalapiedra (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1981), p. 264-65.

³⁹ See Núñez *Liberation Theology* pp. 175-206, for a solid Evangelical analysis of the concept of salvation in liberation theology.

⁴⁰ Conn, *Conversion*, p. 39.

⁴¹ Henry J. Schmidt, ed., *Conversion: Doorway to Discipleship* (Hillsboro, Kansas: The Board of Christian Literature of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1980) pp. 118-119.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁴³ See Carl E. Armerding, ed., *Evangelicals and Liberation* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1977), p. 29ff.

⁴⁴ See the articles by Antonio Rengifo and Hipólito Avila in William F. Warren, ed., *Teología de la Liberación: Una Respuesta Evangélica*. (Cali, Colombia: Seminario Teológico Bautista Internacional, 1989).

⁴⁵ Núñez, *Liberation Theology*, p. 206.

⁴⁶ Samuel Escobar, *Ensayos: Evangelio y Realidad Social*, corrected edition (El Paso: Casa Bautista de Publicaciones, 1988), pp. 37-39 passim.

⁴⁷ Samuel Escobar, *La Fe Evangélica y las Teologías de la Liberación*, (El Paso: Casa Bautista de Publicaciones, 1987), p. 190.

⁴⁸ Mark Lau Branson, and René Padilla, eds., *Conflict and Context: Hermeneutics in the Americas* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986.), pp. 90-91, passim.

⁴⁹ Hugo Assmann, *Teología desde la Praxis de la Liberación* (Salamanca, Spain: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1976), p. 40 (translation mine).

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THE AFFIRMATION OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

Robert E. Coleman

Assurance of Authority

Where we begin in world evangelism largely determines where we will end. If we begin with the human predicament there is little to keep us from ending in frustration, if not despair. But if we start with God, with attention fixed on things above where Christ reigns in eternal triumph, the vision of God's glory inspires to greater resolve and confidence.

The disciples about to receive the command to disciple all nations needed this higher perspective. They had come through the shattering experience of their Lord's betrayal and crucifixion. In the trauma of those events, at one point, the disciples all left him and fled into the night (Mark 14:50-52; Matt. 26:56). Then they confronted the astounding news that Jesus had risen from the dead. The transcendence of the resurrection to everything in the natural realm of law and forces staggered their faith. Indeed, when first told by Mary that Jesus was alive, the disciples "did not believe it" (Mark 16:11, NIV) nor could they believe the testimony of the two men who had walked with Jesus on the Emmaus Road and broke bread with him in their home (Luke 24:13-35; Mark 15:12,13). That evening when he appeared to the apostolic company, except Thomas, the disciples were "startled frightened, thinking they saw a ghost" (Luke 24:37). Rebuking their "lack of faith," Jesus showed them his nailed pierced hands and feet, and invited an inspection of his wounds (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25). The next Sunday he gave Thomas the same opportunity, telling him to "stop doubting and believe" (John 20:27; cf. 20:26-31)¹

Jesus understands the human desire for scientific evidence, and with intuitive sympathy, yet firmness, ministers to those struggling with honest

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doubt. This may explain why, over a period of forty days, in various places and at different times, he showed himself to the disciples, and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive (Acts. 1:3).

As the time approaches for Jesus to return to heaven, the disciples gather on the mountain "where Jesus had told them to go" (Matt. 28:16) Indicative of their deep affection, "when they saw him, they worshipped him" (Matt. 28:17). Yet in this display of their adoration, we are told that "some doubted" (Matt. 28:17).

Why there would be doubt now in the minds of "some" disciples is not explained. Perhaps they were overwhelmed by the wonder of it all. Their faith, though sincere, may still have been weak and halting. More likely, however, I suspect their qualms concerned their own ability to live up to the expectations of their Lord, an anxiety intensified by the awareness that he was soon to leave them.

For whatever reason there was doubt, "Jesus came to them" (Matt. 28:18). Isn't that just like him? He sees our need for reassurance; he knows how we wrestle with inferiority and fear. So before telling the disciples what to do, he said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). In one sweeping declaration, he dispels any uncertainty in their minds about his power. He has absolute sovereignty; his authority reaches across the vast expanse of the planet and unto the farthest star.

Further confirming to his disciples the reality of his power, after giving the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19, 20), "he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight" (Acts 1:9; cf. Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51). His sacrificial ministry thus finished on earth, and henceforth no longer confined by the limitations of space and time, he went back to take his place of authority at the right hand of God. There he reigns in unapproachable majesty, awaiting the day when he shall return to judge the living and the dead, and to reign over his kingdom forever.

Confronting the Gospel

The resurrection and ascension of Jesus make the cross a baffling problem. For when a man dies who has power over death, then in all honesty one must ask: Why did he die in the first place?

To this unavoidable question, the bible offers only one answer: "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). Christ "bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness" (I Peter 2:24).

The late Robert G. Lee liked to tell about his visit to the Holy Land, when the guide of the touring party pointed in the distance to the place called Calvary. Seeing it for the first time, Dr. Lee's excitement was so great that he started to run up the hill. The guide was the first to catch up with him, finding him on the summit, his head bowed, still panting for breath. "Sir, have you been here before?" he asked.

For a moment there was a throbbing silence. Then in whispered awe, Dr. Lee replied, "Yes, I was here nearly two thousand years ago."

Indeed, we were all there nearly two thousand years ago. When Jesus died on that cross, he took our place. We had all turned to our own way, and the penalty of sin is death (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Yet "God so loved the world" that he gave his Son to die for us, even "while we were still sinners" (John 3:16; Rom 5:8). As our representative, he suffered for us, "the just for the unjust, in order that he might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" (I Peter 3:18, NASV). This is the Gospel of salvation—the amazing news that the Creator and Lord of the universe has intervened in human history, and through the mighty conquest of Jesus Christ, made a way whereby "whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Centrality of Christ

The redemption of humankind centers in the person and work of God's incarnate Word. "For just as through the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous" (Rom 5:19; cf. 5:12-21). Though God's love extends to all nations, it ultimately focuses in his only begotten Son. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men" (I Tim. 2:5).

Think of what his representation means! To realize, as Paul said to the Colossians, that "he is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together . . . He is the beginning and the first born from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col. 1:15-20; cf. 2:9-15).

Having, therefore, completed once and for all his redemptive mission, "God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11; cf. Eph. 1:20-23).

The affirmation of his exalted position of authority resounds through the witness of the apostolic church. "Jesus is Lord!"² No less than 750 times in the New Testament he is identified by this term, of which more than a hundred references appear in the book of Acts.

Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost characterizes this most basic Christian confession (Acts 2:16-39). Having spoken of Christ's death, resurrection, and exaltation at the right hand of God, he concludes: "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36; cf. 5:31; 10:36; Rom. 14:9).

To the question, "What must I do to be saved?", the answer was unequivocal: "Believe on the Lord Jesus" (Acts 16:31). It was expected, too, that this faith in the Lordship of Jesus be confessed with the mouth (Rom 10:9,10). The invitation to receive Christ was to all, but "whoever" responded called on "the name of the Lord" (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13).

Lord God Almighty

To identify Jesus by this title is to declare that he is "God, the blessed and only Ruler," the King of glory (I Tim 6 15; Rev. 17:14). It is to affirm with Jesus that he "has all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18).

In this sovereign power, while he was among us in the flesh he taught the word of God (Matt. 7:24-29; John 12:49,50; 14:24); he forgave sins (Matt. 9:2,3; Mark 2:6,7; Luke 5:20,21); he commanded devils to flee (Mark 1:27,28; Luke 4:36,37); he wrought miracles (e.g. Matt. 9:25; Luke 7:15; John 11:44); and he promised to send the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). Jesus lived in the consciousness of deity. He spoke of his heavenly origin (John 8:23), and the glory enjoyed with the Father before the world was made (John 17:5). Asserting his perfection, he pointed out that no one could accuse him of sin (John 8:46). All his deeds were claimed to be the works of God (John 5:17; 10:14,15; 14:11, al). With unassuming frankness he identified himself as the Son of Man who commanded heavenly hosts (e.g., Matt. 13:41; 16:27). In the same manner, he asked his followers to give him the devotion they would give to God (e.g., Matt. 10:37,39), and he accepted their worship.

Not surprisingly, then, salvation is equated with knowing the Son of God, whom to know aright is life everlasting. "I am the way and the truth and the life," Jesus said. "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Not only does he exclude other options, but he affirms that God has "granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those" given him (John 17:2). Defining what this means, Jesus prays: "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

Clearly the destiny of the human race turns on the way men and women believe the word of Christ. He sets himself before us, not only as the object of our faith, but as the sole means of salvation. Moreover, Jesus said that God "has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him" (John 5:22,23; cf. 3:18; 5:27).

To many persons this teaching of Christ seems arrogant. What right does he have to impose his way upon others, they ask? A man once said to Dr. R.A. Torrey, "I'm not a Christian, but I am moral and upright. I would like to know what you have against me." Torrey looked the man in the eye, and with compassion, replied: "I charge you, sir, with treason against heaven's king."³ The evangelist's retort may sound harsh, but isn't that the issue Christ makes us face? If, indeed, he is God incarnate, with all authority in heaven and earth, should not every creature acknowledge him and every tongue declare his praise?

Judgment Upon Unbelief

Exclusive as the claims of Christ may be, "there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). For, as the church has affirmed from the beginning, "there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom we live (I Cor. 8:6).

Many persons of course will honor him as one of the great religious leaders of the world, even perhaps the most noble man who ever lived; but to insist that he is Lord, and that he alone has the key to eternal life, may be dismissed with a chuckle, if not disdain. Their resentment rises even more to the surface when reference is made to the judgment of God upon unbelief.

The popular notion, encouraged by our pluralistic society, is that it does not matter what one believes about Christ, for all roads lead to God, and ultimately everyone will be saved. God is viewed as too kind to sentence anyone to hell, or conversely, that people are too nice to be damned. In either case, the teachings of Christ regarding retribution for sin are naively circumvented, while the atoning purpose of his death is effectively denied.

The fact is that the preaching of the cross, and all that it entails in the finality of Christ's saving work, runs counter to the wisdom of this world. It cuts across the grain of our self-righteousness, and lays bare the arrogance of our pretended independence. Anyone renouncing their own rights, who comes to Jesus in true repentance and faith, can expect to be called a fool (I Cor. 1:17-2:14; 3:18-23; 4:10).

One has to ask, however, if it makes no difference how we accept the authority of Christ, why preach the Gospel?

Devastating as it may be to human pride, Jesus taught that when "the Son of Man comes in his glory" all people will be gathered before him in judgment (Matt. 25:31; cf. 11:22; 12:36; Mark 6:11). In that day the wicked will be severed from the just (Matt. 13:49; cf. 24:40; Luke 17:34), like a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats (Matt. 25:32,46) or like what is separated from the tares (Matt. 13:30). Those who follow the course of this world will be "thrown" into darkness (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; Luke

13:28); assigned to "eternal punishment" (Matt. 25:46); "cursed" into the hell of fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41; cf. 5:22,29,30; 10:2; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 12:5).

The Unreached World

But what about those multitudes who have never had opportunity to hear the Gospel, more than half the world's population living in the bondage of false religion or idolatrous materialism? Will they be judged by the sincerity of their own quest for salvation through general revelation? The problem with this view is that sincerity does not change error. And who has ever perfectly responded to all the light they have to know God through the natural world? That is why the Scriptures conclude that everyone is "without excuse" and given over "to a depraved mind"⁵ (Rom. 1:20,28; cf. 1:18-32; 2:14,15).

Let it be understood, though, that God "accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (Acts 10:34,35). Those who truly seek him, and walk in the light they have, he is pleased to give more light (Matt. 7:7; 13:12; Mark 4:25; Luke 11:9; cf. Rev. 3:20; Jer. 29:13). So responsibility for salvation rests with each individual.

Does this mean that one can be saved without a knowledge of Christ. To this, I can only answer that if such an alternative exists, it has not been disclosed to us. God, within his own nature, can do whatever he pleases, but I can act only on the basis of God's revealed Word.

That is why we dare not hesitate, nor spare any cost, to bring the Gospel to the unreached peoples of the earth. Though not their judge, for all we know they are lost—lost without hope and doomed to hell. To ignore their plight would bring into question how deeply we take to heart the message of Christ.

When Charles Peace, the infamous criminal was offered by the prison chaplain "the consolations of religion" on his way to the scaffold, the wretched man turned upon him, and exclaimed: "Do you believe it? Do you believe it?" Then, with obvious bitterness, he cried: "If I believed that, I would crawl across England on broken glass on my hands and knees to tell men it was true."⁶

Indeed, if we believe that Jesus is Lord, and that he died to bring redemption to all people, then we cannot sit by idly while multitudes perish. Knowing what is at stake, we must do for them what we would want them to do for us, were we in their place.

Spiritual Warfare

We can expect opposition. The claims of Jesus always conflict with the aspirations of Satan. This pretender to the throne of Christ, having been

cast from heaven, never rests in his effort to usurp the authority of Christ. Challenging the rule of Satan means warfare, not against flesh and blood, but against diabolical principalities of evil and spiritual wickedness that reaches into high places (Eph. 6:12).

Nowhere will the satanic attack become more determined than in evangelism. That is where the issue of authority is decided. Knowing that his kingdom of darkness is threatened, the devil seeks to remove the good seed of the Gospel (Matt. 13:19); he sows seeds of discord (Matt. 13:38,39); he blinds the eyes of unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:4). Like a roaring lion, "the prince of this world" prowls about "looking for someone to devour" (John 14:30; I Peter 5:8). Make no mistake about it. Turning people "from the power of Satan unto God" involves mortal combat with the evil one (Acts 26:18). Every advance of the Gospel will have to be won by conquest.

The contest becomes intense when encountering other religions. Though these ideologies may provide some meaning to the lives of their adherents, insofar as they divert final authority from Christ, they reflect the deception of "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). There are areas where we have common ground, of course, and we should seek in humility and compassion to build bridges of understanding, but let us be realistic about the demonic treachery that beguiles their souls. The conspiracy of evil has infiltrated all the power structures of society, including governments, schools, business conglomerates, social agencies, even the organized church. No institution fallen creatures have developed escapes the enemies' cunning. Working through misguided subjects and the systems of this world, and using whatever devious means expedient—slander, intrigue and deceit, rebellion, betrayal, intimidation, infliction of torture—the devil seeks to destroy the work of Christ. There are indications, too, that his attacks upon the servants of God will become more brazen and murderous as the end of the age approaches (Rev. 12:12).

Triumph of the Kingdom

But we need not fear the fury of the adversary. Greater is he who reigns on high than the manipulator of the world (I John 4:4). Jesus has all authority, not Satan. The time is hastening when all the powers of this age shall be put under his feet (Matt. 22:44; Acts 2:35; Heb. 1:13; 16:13): If, then, Christ is for us, who can be against us. In him we are more than conquerors (Rom 8:37).

Disciples of the cross engage the enemy in this assurance of victory. The church of God, like an undefeatable army, will at last shatter the strongholds of Satan and storm the gates of hell. Whatever the struggles in this present age, we know that nothing can ultimately prevail against Zion's king. He already reigns in the hearts of those who worship him, and the day is coming when he shall take dominion over heaven and earth. The affirmation of the Great Commission points to this glorious consummation

of history, to which all things are moving, when finally "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doeth its successive journeys run; his kingdom spread from shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more."

Confident of their Lord's ascent to the throne of glory, and empowered by his Spirit, the disciples went forth boldly to herald the gospel to the ends of the earth. They were convinced that God's redeeming grace extended to "all flesh," even to peoples "who are far off" (Acts 2:17, 39; cf. Joel 2:2832; Eph. 2:13,17). In Christ there was "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (Gal. 3:28). All who come to him "are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29; cf. Acts 3:25; 26:6; 28:20). What the Creator planned in the beginning when "from one man he made every nation of men" (Acts 17:26), thus finds realization in the coming kingdom, a message resounding again and again through the preaching of Peter, Stephen, Philip, Paul, and all the other apostolic witnesses (Acts 2:30; 3:21; 7:55; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23). Through the transforming power of the Word and the Spirit, a day was envisioned when the completed church, the bride of Christ, would be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24).

Celebration in Heaven

This is what John saw when, caught up in the Spirit, he looked through the door of heaven, and beheld that great worshipping host before the throne of God (Rev. 4:1,2). Joined with the seraphim and cherubim (Rev. 4:6-8; 5:8,14; 7:11; 19:4), the elders (Rev. 4:4,10; 5:8,11; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4), and myriads of angels (Rev. 5:11,12; 7:11), he sees the assembly of the saints, great and small, gathered from the foundation of the world. They are clothed in white robes and are holding palm branches in their hands. Their number is so great that "no one can count them." As far as the eye can see in every direction—from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south—they are gathered. They come "from every nation, tribe, people and language (Rev. 7:9; cf. 12:10; 15:2,3).

The Great Commission is fulfilled! In the schedule of eternity, it is already accomplished; the celebration has begun. Hallelujahs of the victorious church are ringing through the courts of heaven. A mighty shout can be heard, saying: "Salvation to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev. 7:10).

Do you hear them? With a "loud voice," they cry: "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

Listen! They are singing: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers . . . has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death" (Rev. 12:10, 11).

In the final acclamation of the saints at the marriage supper of the Lamb, they are shouting: "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments" (Rev. 19:1,2). And again they shout, Hallelujah" (Rev. 19:3). The magnitude of their united voice is likened to "the roar of rushing waters," as though a hundred oceans were crashing the shore (Rev. 19:1,6). Or, to use another figure, the intensity of their victory shout as compared to "loud peals of thunder," splitting the heavens in rolling sonic booms, saying: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns!" (Rev. 19:6).

The mission of the church now on earth may seem slow, and sometimes discouraging but the ultimate triumph of evangelism is never in doubt. The king is coming! Someday the trumpet will sound, and the Son of Man, with his legions of angels, shall descend from heaven in trailing clouds of glory, and he shall reign over all, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Rev. 17:14).

Living on Tip Toes

The Reverend E.P. Scott, a pioneer missionary to India, once came upon a hostile band of warriors in an expedition to an unreached area. They seized him, and pointed their long spears at his heart. Feeling utterly helpless, but resting on the promises of God, the missionary drew out the violin that he carried with him, and began to play and sing in the native language:

"All hail the power of Jesus' Name!
Let angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown him Lord of all."⁸

As the words rang out, Reverend Scott closed his eyes, momentarily expecting death. But when nothing happened, even after the third stanza, he opened his eyes, and saw that the spears had fallen from the hands of his captors. Tears filled their eyes. The warriors pled with him to tell them of that name—the name above every name. So he went home with them, and for several years worked in their midst, winning many to Christ.

I see in this story a parable for us today. Not that we will be delivered from adversity, even death, for God may want to seal our witness with blood. But whatever may come to us in the course of making disciples, the name of Christ shall finally prevail. God is working through every circumstance to accomplish his program. We shall overcome. "While it does not yet appear what we shall be, we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2). And every knee shall bow before him, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord.

This is more than a creed; it is the glorious affirmation of our Lord himself; "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). So let us pick up his shout, and go forth to proclaim his glory to every creature, until

. . . with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall;
We'll join the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all!¹⁰

NOTES

¹ The Gospel writers make no attempt to hide the disciples' incredulous tendency, particularly regarding the resurrection. This only adds authenticity to the account, and actually makes it easier to identify with them, for the disciples are seen to be persons with the same human foibles as ourselves.

² Probably this simple statement constituted the first creed of the Christian church, as might be inferred from Romans 10:9. Other confessions of faith may be reflected in Matt. 16:16; 20:31 and I Corinthians 15:3,4. We should keep in mind, of course, that the writings of the New Testament, which were being circulated from this time onward, constituted a full composition of doctrine. For more information, see Oscar Cullman, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949).

³ R.A. Torrey, *Great Gospel Sermons*, I (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1949), p. 138.

⁴ Not all proponents of religion have this universalistic assumption, of course. Some, like Muslims, are quite adamant in their own exclusivistic beliefs. What it means to be saved also may be variously understood. Hindus and Buddhists, as well as devotees of the "new age" movement, for example, look upon the ultimate blessing as the loss of self-identity in some kind of absorption with a great cosmic nirvana. The kind of popular universalism that I refer to here is not so much an espoused faith, but more of a religious indifference to any absolutes—a humanistic philosophy that pervades our culture.

⁵ The limits of this presentation do not permit a full discussion of all the issues. For a summary of the problem, with a brief overview of its recent development in the Church, see Kenneth S. Kantzer, "The Claims of Christ and Religious Pluralism," *Evangelism on the Cutting Edge*, edited by Robert Coleman (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1986), pp. 15-28. An excellent popular treatment of the subject from the standpoint of missions is by Robert McQuilkin, *The Great Omission* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984).

⁶ Quoted by G. Ray Jorden, *The Supreme Possession* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1945), p. 45.

⁷ From the hymn "Jesus Shall Reign Where're the Sun," by Isaac Watts.

⁸ From the hymn, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name," by Edward Perronet.

⁹ Recounted by Louis Albert Banks, *Immortal Hymns and Their Stories* (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1898), pp. 312, 313; also reprinted by Amos R. Wells, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name," *The Christian Endeavor World*, May 26, 1904.

¹⁰ Edward Perronet, "All Hail the Power."

A WESLEYAN VISION OF MISSION AND EVANGELISM FOR THE 21st CENTURY

Stephen S. Kim

I. The Mandate for Mission and Evangelism

We have only to look at the long trend of membership decline which has plagued the mainline Protestant churches in North America since the 1960s (with few exceptions, such as the Southern Baptists), to realize how urgent the mandate of mission and evangelism is. My purpose in this paper is to draw attention to the need for deliberating together to find better and more effective ways to proclaim the gospel, strengthen discipleship, and enhance spiritual maturity, and also to study the meaning of church membership and faith.

One of my assumptions is that strengthening the church, on the one hand, and the proclamation of the good news, on the other hand—i.e. mission and evangelism—are inseparable. Another of my assumptions is that proclamation (*kerygma*) and ministry (*diakonia*) together have integrity; or, to look at it another way, that the needs of evangelists and missionaries are not to be bifurcated from the needs of those whom they evangelize and to whom they are in mission.

It is further my purpose to demonstrate that, in the Wesleyan tradition, personal holiness and social holiness are not separate, but part of the whole; and further, that holy living, as well as spreading such wholistic holiness, is the true meaning of evangelism. Under the rubric of a "theology of the burning heart" we find a foundation for mission and evangelism: a passion for holiness, and a compassion for humanity.

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II. The Context and Trends

1. Internal

The internal layer of the context can be found in *A Report of the 36th Biennial Meeting of the Association of Theological Schools Programs* in 1988, and several important articles in the July 1989 issue of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*.

The main themes of both these sources are globalization and pluralism. The former, having primary concern with issues of theological education in the coming decades, spells out assumptions regarding the global context of life in general and of ministry to a pluralistic world. These can be viewed as "an ominous threat" or as "an exhilarating opportunity" for mission, evangelism, and ministry:

A planetary perspective on life and community in more recent times was not absent from the thinking of earlier centuries, but dramatic changes in more recent times make it impossible now to ignore a global context. The world in which we minister, the world in which we teach and preach, has changed. A new and fresh reality stands before us clearly, sharply, perhaps even defiantly.¹

Globalism is no longer simply a fact: it is a challenge, a demand. There is not only a profound connectedness of human life worldwide, but a deeply disturbing threat to the planet itself from human conflict, human iniquities, and human exploitation, with which ministry and evangelism need to be concerned. The international cooperation increasingly required in areas of economics, peace, and military readiness, as well as in technological, sociological, and cultural affairs, speaks to the global reality of the 1990s and beyond, and also to the church's response to that reality.

The global reality, its complex interdependent structure of power, its religious diversity, and its extreme stratification of human beings, economically, politically, spiritually, and socially, shape the context for the mission and ministry of theological schools as well as the church in general.²

This assessment confirmed and sharpened the findings of the ATS/Lilly Endowment study, *Christian Identity and Theological Education*, by Joseph C. Hough, Jr. and John B. Cobb, Jr.³

In the July 1989 issue of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Norman E. Thomas summarized the ATS report in his article on the globalization of mission:

... the Task Force [of ATS] assumed that new sources and methods will be required to help the churches respond

to the new global reality. These will include non-Western sources, increased use of the insights of the social sciences, new learning styles, and significant inputs by both men and women of various ethnic, national, and racial groups. They judged North American theological institutions at present to be both peculiarly global and provincial. To their credit they have achieved degrees of interdenominational, cross-cultural, multiracial and gender-balanced theological education greater than has been achieved on other continents. On the other hand, their continued functioning as if Western theological education should be the global norm is a sign of their continuing parochialism.⁴

Sharing the ATS's concern with globalism, several other articles in this issue of the *IBMR* address the related issues of secularism and pluralism from the perspective of ecumenism. Anna Marie Aagaard, professor of systematic theology at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, and Lesslie Newbigin, a retired bishop of the Church of South India in Madras, and formerly on the faculty of the Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham, England, reported on the European scene, and drew attention to secularizing and de-Christianising trends.

Addressing the challenge of new forms of faith, the "Seven Theses on Interreligious Dialogue" prepared by the Theological Advisory Commission of the Roman Catholic Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) at Singapore in April 1987, assume that our future ministry and evangelism must be done in a pluralistic context. As the Asian bishops put it,

the Theses seek to offer a new paradigm, a new way of looking at the whole and at the interrelationship of its various elements. We hope that they will facilitate a new insight into the identity of the Church in a religiously pluralistic world, and a renewal of its mission, so that it may be at the service of the Spirit, who is leading the whole world to a unity.⁵

The catholic spirit that was evident at the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism in San Antonio, Texas, in May 1989, under the auspices of the World Council of Churches, was likewise an expression of globalism, but from a slightly different perspective, namely, the need for balance between personal holiness and compassion for others. This was further emphasized in a "Letter from Those with Evangelical Concerns at the World Council of Churches' Conference at San Antonio to the Lausanne II Conference at Manila," which included the following important appeal:

We feel that the expression of concern for the rights of the poor must not be misunderstood as showing that the World Council of Churches has relinquished the central concern of

devotion and faithful witness to Jesus. For he is the very basis of the compassion and justice that requires that the voice of the poor be heard. . . . We ask you that you join us in refusing to identify the WCC declarations about the cries of the oppressed for justice as a retreat from an affirmation of the centrality and finality of Jesus Christ.⁶

All of these reports stress the importance of keeping the wholeness of humanity as well as the wholeness (fullness) of the gospel — or, evangelism and social responsibility — in creative tension. The context is both local and global, but pluralism challenges mission and evangelism right in our own neighborhood. The local and global contexts overlap in today's and tomorrow's pluralistic world.

2. External

The external context has to do with trends in our society. In 1988, the Christianity Today Institute published a report titled *Into the Next Century: Trends Facing the Church*. The volume is a collection of ten trends facing the church, viewed from the perspective of some Christian leaders.⁷ The following are some of their observations and projections:

Materialism and Me-ism

There will be a continuing privatization of goals, as both "clergy and laity alike calculate every move to maximize personal benefit." This growing materialism and "me-ism" will increasingly tend to picture God as a television game-show host with prizes to give away.⁸ According to the Roper Report, virtually everything that money can buy now figures more prominently in Americans' concept of "the good life" than was the case in 1981.⁹

The church will be plagued by constant attempts to "one-upmanship," political maneuvering of clergy, disproportionate expenditure on local church needs and luxuries, and church activities that focus on having fun rather than serving.¹⁰

There will be more cursory religion, with the selling of "cheap grace" coupled with technological advances, particularly television. These will overpower faith and confuse the minds of believers with myriads of distorted images. The seduction of new cults promising to fill the spiritual vacuum in the heart will be rampant.¹¹

"Band-aidism," "pseudo-theologies," "spiritual smorgasbordism," "supermarketism," "passerbyism," and other popularisms will proliferate. These will be so myopic in their vision that they will thwart the ideals of the Christian religion revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There will likewise be a "feeling-goodism" that lacks longterm commitment, and a "born-againism" that is merely self-serving. It will require only one bad turn, and the edifice built on vanity and egotism will collapse. American Christians will be more deluded than ever, and thirstier than ever for the truth of the gospel and sincerity of heart.

Secular Humanism

Connected with materialism and me-ism, secular humanism will grow even stronger within the church in the 21st century, buttressed by scientism and technologism. American churches will be pervaded by massive cultural trends that are inimical to traditional Christianity to an unparalleled degree. While Dean Kelley speaks correctly to the ills of more liberally-oriented churches when he observes that evangelicals have been diligent in providing meaning and purpose for their members, and thus have brought about successful mobilization of their sympathizers,¹² George Marsden reminds us that, despite their doctrinal attack against theological liberalism, fundamentalists and evangelicals now have problems of their own. They increasingly encounter subtle versions of similar sub-Christian values (such as secular humanism) infiltrating behind their lines.¹³ Preachers and evangelists promise "the good life," health, success, self-fulfillment, and even wealth, especially if one supports that particular evangelist. The high cost of discipleship is a thing of the past. Prophetic religion is a risk at best.

By the same token, many church growth theories have deteriorated into following market analyses to dictate both the content as well as the packaging of the gospel. Preachers sweet-talk, or they perish! Shallow religions attract shallow, hollow souls. "Therapeutic" religion will increasingly add to the hollowness of the American soul, and trendiness will override the norm. Traditional values will suffer from "the tyranny of the present."¹⁴

The Coloring of America

Most futurists agree that the North American population grows at a faster rate among minority groupings than the nation as a whole, and will continue to do so in the next few decades. This is due on the one hand to the younger average age of minority groupings, and on the other hand to a steady flow of immigrants.¹⁵ By 1990, one in every four Americans belonged to minority groupings, and almost one in every three will belong by the year 2000. "It is projected that by the end of the next century, there will be a new majority population in America — a majority of minorities."¹⁶

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population groupings referred to as "other races" (American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Asians, and Pacific Islanders) grew far faster than the Whites, Blacks and Hispanics throughout the 1980s. By the year 2000, Hispanics will surpass the Blacks as the largest minority group (12.5%). However, their median income will be \$20,306, compared to a non-Hispanic median income of \$31,610, with the Blacks following closely behind. Asians will also register a steady growth in numbers. By the year 2000, Asian Americans are expected to constitute 3%-4% of the nation's population, and a high percentage of these will occupy managerial and professional positions (53.3%). A high percentage will also have college degrees (34%), which will be well above the national average among minority groups (20%). However, Asian immigrants since 1975 (mostly Cambodian refugees, and some recent immigrants from Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam), have comparatively lower education and income, and this trend is likely to continue.

The church will most likely be struggling with race issues well into the new century. But they ultimately will have no other option than to change along racial and ethnic lines, and this will prove to be a challenge to traditional Christian theology.¹⁷ The challenge lies in how the church views pluralism. Bishop Jack Tuell of The United Methodist Church has cautioned against the confusion of pluralism as a phenomenological description of the fact of diverse gifts and backgrounds with that of a theological-doctrinal prescription.¹⁸ Yet James Earl Massey also cautions the church not to succumb to the selfish, political isolation of groups along homogeneous racial and ethnic lines that so often occurs in North American society. Racism, particularly institutional racism, continues to prove a most difficult stumbling block for the Christian churches, especially for some churches of a more conservative orientation. Partitionism (putting the issue of race relations in a separate compartment from spirituality) may advance with the short-term acceptance of conservative perspectives, but will eventually have to be challenged even there.

Feminism

The 21st century will witness the end of female passivity, according to Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, who claims that the image and role of women in history have changed with respect to the dominant cultural stereotypes of what is natural.¹⁹ In today's society, and that of the 21st century, the image and role of women will increasingly be decided by women themselves: their choice of career — law, medicine, researchers at universities and institutes, military and police officers, astronauts, etc. They will also assume a greater role in political life — on city and school boards and councils, to say nothing of state and federal office. By the late 1980s, more than 50% of all American women were gainfully employed, and the rate is increasing.

One corollary of this for the church is that, as more women enter the workplace, fewer of them are available for volunteer work in the church. There will no longer be the host of women always ready to assist the pastor, or to serve on committees, or to help with the nursery school. More than half of the ordained clergy are likely to be female in the 21st century: women students at seminaries already comprised almost 50% in the late 1980s. As more women work, more children will be left to the para-family organizations such as nursery school. Next to the poor and the elderly, this will prove to be the most urgent need for Christian ministry in the coming century — and also a tremendous opportunity.

3. Some Implications

These are only a few of the major social trends that will have some effect on the church as it plans ahead for evangelism and church growth in the 1990s and beyond. According to George Barna, these and other contextual factors mean that the church as a whole will grow slowly through the remainder of this century to the beginning of the new. But only those congregations and denominations which articulate the basics of the faith

in a coherent way, and with biblical support, will gain in the intense competition for church-going families. Most adults will shy away from theological and controversial issues. Denominations will seek survival by mergers, and hierarchical organizations will be less and less attractive to average churchgoers, who will opt for decentralization and participatory democracy.²⁰

The new generation will be more attracted to the church as a place for meaningful worship, and to new relational or intellectual approaches to deeper spiritual experience. In the new century, the United States will no longer be the largest nation of Christians in the world,²¹ but we will not be without new opportunities for meaningful Christian mission and ministry.

III. The Wesleyan Vision

1. "The Burning Heart"

John Wesley had a more compelling answer to these challenges: *the burning heart*. In his sermon, "Catholic Spirit," he declared that if "thy heart is right, as my heart is with thy heart," then "give me thine hand. . . Let all opinions alone on one side and the other. Only 'give me thine hand.'"²²

While these words obviously refer to a catholicity of heart, they also imply an eagerness for the wholeness and holiness of a believing heart. Wesley proclaimed the gospel in the streets of Bristol, in a meadow at Baptist Mills, on top of Hanham Mount, and across the length and breadth of the country. He may have lacked the eloquence of other contemporary preachers, but he was surpassed by none in the consuming fire he held in his heart for the souls of miners and foundry workers. He referred to himself as "a brand plucked from the burning" — a reference his rescue as a small child from a fire which destroyed the family rectory at Epworth — and he went on to fuel the 18th century Revival with his burning heart for Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. This same "burning heart" is, I suggest, the vision, theological and otherwise, which provides the foundation for evangelism and church growth.

Words such as "the burning heart" may give, on the one hand, a false impression of the present state of the church. They may imply that it is lethargic, which it certainly is not. On the other hand, they may give the appearance that a quick solution is possible, and again this is not the case. If anything, the words suggest the work of the Holy Spirit as the source for a task which is humanly difficult, if not impossible.

It is in this sense of spiritual empowerment that it is at least plausible for mainline Protestant churches to find an opportunity in today's situation to reclaim the glow and enthusiasm that they once had. This is not to argue for membership increase as an absolute measure of faithfulness, but rather to unearth the more deep-set theological issues as we proceed from mapping the context for renewal to discerning the message of God for the church of today — a God who always speaks to the human situation in the context of redemption.

2. Wesley's Theology of Holiness

The roots of Wesley's theology are found in very diverse sources.²³ Indeed, the sources are so diverse, that Albert Outler's characterization of Wesley's theological spirit seems quite fitting when he describes him as "plundering the Egyptians," an allegory coined originally by Origen from a story in Exodus 12:18-36.²⁴ His sources can be put into three categories: (1) his Catholic heritage — the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, Augustine, Vincent of Lérins, the Eastern Fathers, particularly Macarius the Egyptian and Ephraem Syrus, and the Roman Catholic mystics; (2) the Protestant Reformation — the evangelical tradition of Martin Luther, John Calvin, as well as the doctrines of Anglicanism; and (3) Pietism and Puritanism.²⁵

Even though Wesley's theology was multi-layered and multi-focused, his concept of salvation of the whole person, and of prevenient grace, were predicated on his doctrine of original sin. Indeed, this was a source for his characteristically Methodist doctrine of "going on to perfection," the necessary progress in the Christian life implied by an awareness of the human propensity to self-satisfied complacency and spiritual stagnation.²⁶ As Frederick Norwood observed, this emphasis "expresses the central doctrine held in common with the Protestant Reformation, of the grace of God in Jesus Christ as the source of salvation."²⁷

In other words, Wesley's theology was one of "the human flaw" which is to be redeemed by holiness of heart and life through the offering of Christ. This is the gist of the gospel. Reflecting on the human condition in letters to George Downing in April 1761, and to "various clergymen" in April 1764, Wesley listed three Christian essentials: (1) Original sin; (2) Justification by grace through faith alone; and (3) Holiness of heart and life. In the words of Albert Outler, these are the "three central pillars of Wesleyan theology."²⁸ They bring together the two great Christian traditions of "holy living" and "*sola fide*," stressing on the one hand the radical human flaw that is incurable by any human effort or remedy, and on the other hand the grace of God which beckons sinners to repentance and moves them toward the fullness of sanctification.

The divine agent in this process is Jesus Christ, in whom God suffers, redeems the flaw in humanity, and initiates a new life. This is the essence of the gospel: For God so loved the world [humanity in travail] that he gave of himself [his only Son] to the world in order that the world might not perish [in final meaninglessness] but have eternal life [the full human potential], here and hereafter. This is the good news.

In Wesley's mature thought, what mattered more than ever, according to Outler, was that "going on to perfection" has a consistent character and a clear end in view: (1) *love* (of God and neighbor), (2) *trust* (in Christ and the sufficiency of his grace), and (3) *joy* (joy updwelling in the heart from the 'prevenience' of the indwelling spirit). This is "holy living": to love God and neighbor with all your heart, to trust securely in Christ's merits, and to live joyously "in the Spirit."²⁹

Wesley's evangelical theology is thus a theology of holiness: an integration of inward holiness (our love of God) and outward holiness (our con-

sequent love of neighbor) as the precondition of our own proper self-love into a true "whol-i-ness," i.e., "perfect love." Words like "holy living," "holiness," "sanctification," and "Christian perfection," which are found in hundreds of places in Wesley's writings, are explained in his own summary of the meaning of religion:

What *is* religion then? It is easy to answer, if we consult the oracles of God. According to these, it lies in one single point: it is neither more nor less than love. It is the love which "is the fulfilling of law, the end of the commandment." Religion is the love of God and our neighbour; that is every man under heaven.³⁰

To love God means, for Wesley, "an awareness of our radical dependence upon God's grace and our gladness that this is the truth about our lives . . . a sense of Holy Presence and of security and warmth in that Presence . . . not, at bottom, part of human potential, save in the carefully guarded sense that God's prevenient grace stimulates and enables us to respond, positively and gratefully. . . . Thus, faith alone remains as the threshold of all true holiness in heart and life. . . . Love of neighbor is a function of our concern to hallow *all* of life, in all of its occasions, great and small."³¹

In this sense, Wesley was from the first an evangelist in the fullest sense of the word. Indeed, his conversion, his "change of heart" at the Aldersgate Street meeting in May 1738, made him an evangelist *par excellence*. In the words of Skevington Wood, "the combination of the best, both in the Anglican and Puritan traditions, helped to mold him into an apostle to the nation."³²

Wesley's "burning heart" was truly the foundation of his successful evangelism. Such whole holiness — holy living and the love of neighbors as well as the proclamation of a graceful life — constitute true evangelism, i.e., a message in action, and a burning heart for holiness and love. That is the heart of the Great Commission.

IV. Passion for Holiness and Compassion for Humanity

As religion (or faith, as Wilfred Cantwell Smith defines it³³) is a matter of the heart, then awakening, great or small, will not happen unless there is a change of heart. In fact, the very word "awakening" means a change of heart, and is thus the key to mission and evangelism. A missional theology of the burning heart is therefore about changing the heart, personally and corporately.

Our sin today is a general tendency to regard evangelism and church growth as if they were works of human ingenuity and industry. They are God's work! Planning and strategizing may seem advantageous, but only temporarily, and in a way so shallow and hollow that success does not please the heart. And thus the church is losing the hearts of the believers.

So engrossed are we about "catching the Spirit," that we seem to have forgotten it is the Spirit who catches us. We need only to open our hearts in humility, and the Spirit cleanses us, empties us, and prepares us for the Spirit's descent — which is itself, of course, also the work of the Holy Spirit, the prevenient grace of God.

The burning heart is God's heart, embodied in Christ, and it is the essence of the Holy Spirit: a heart burning with love — love that is "patient and kind . . . not jealous or conceited or proud . . . not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable . . . does not keep a record of wrongs . . . is not happy with evil, but happy with the truth . . . never gives up" (I Cor.13, GNV). Burning with love for God and for neighbors, God's people cannot do otherwise than be patient, kind, forgiving, and loving. As true Christians they will be caught up in the spirit of the burning Holy Spirit, with Christ as their living exemplar.

This means that first of all God is looking for a *pure* heart, i.e., holiness, in those who engage in mission and evangelism. In sending Samuel to anoint David in place of Saul, God said to the prophet, "For the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (I Samuel 16:7, NRSV). "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?" asks the psalmist, "and who shall stand in his holy place? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully" (Psalm 24:3-4, NRSV). Before we begin our work of evangelism, the blood of Christ the Lamb must cleanse our hearts.

God is also looking for loving hearts, hearts full of love. Without such hearts, all our efforts are hollow and fake. This means love of God *and* of neighbor—the two are inseparable. To love God is to love God's children, all God's children, and *vice versa*. Another quality that God desires is sincerity of heart, a heart that never gives up, even in the face of its own sinfulness. God built the church, not on a perfect rock, but on the impetuous, stumbling, yet sincere heart that was Peter's. We may never become perfect in God's measure; but God will nevertheless accept our sincere, burning hearts, committed to be burning for his will.

Only such burning hearts will be used by God to change the hearts of today's and tomorrow's men and women, and to redeem them from materialism, me-ism, secular humanism, and the exclusivisms of racism, male-ism, and partitionism. Cultural and racial issues such as these were addressed by the Pasadena Consultation on the Homogeneous Unit Principle, and in the Willowbank Report on Gospel and Culture (Lausanne Occasional Papers, Nos. 1 & 2), confirming an eschatological hope through the agency of the Holy Spirit for harmonious and heterogeneous fellowship which will be enhanced by the diversity of languages and cultures.³⁴

Through such burning hearts, Christian mission and ministry can be effected through lives of true, giving love, with the cleansing of Christ's blood, and by the quickening of the Holy Spirit. Through such embodiment, and not simply through a message about it, will true evangelism be done. Life *is* the message, and the two should be inseparable, just as personal and social holiness are inseparable. This is what is meant by the

contextualization of theology, which the Willowbank Report likewise confirmed.³⁵

Authentic church growth, and strategies for it, must be predicated upon an evangelism of the burning heart, or else it will be pleasing neither to God nor to our own heart. As Melvin L. Hodges puts it:

... the beginning of church expansion is in the heart of God
... Church expansion does not begin with better methods or more money. Rather, it is a continuation of redemption, in the heart of God from eternity, revealed in His Son. This ministry was imparted by Christ to His disciples, energized by the Holy Spirit, and has been given to Christians today as both gift and command.³⁶

Proclamation of the good news, in words *and* in life, must be motivated by a burning love for the souls of God's children everywhere. Planning for the development of missional congregations must likewise be aimed at loving and caring for the souls of the disadvantaged and downtrodden, their physical *and* their spiritual needs. All other motives are less than evangelistic in the true sense of the word. The church will grow only through burning hearts. This means that, even when the church grows slowly, or does not grow at all, its leaders must have faith. They must not panic, nor must they resort to manipulative methods; for their burning hearts are merely being tested by God, to see if their love is true.

Will there be a Third Great Awakening? That will depend on the passion of God's people for holiness, and their compassion for humanity.

NOTES

¹ "Report of the Committee on Global Theological Education," to the Association of Theological Schools, 1988, p.1.

² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³ Joseph C. Hough, Jr., and John B. Cobb, Jr., *Christian Identity and Theological Education* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985).

⁴ Norman E. Thomas, "From Missions to Globalization: Teaching Missiology in North American Seminaries," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (July 1989), pp. 103-107.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁷ *Into the Next Century: Trends Facing the Church*, published by the Christianity Today Institute, 1988. The volume includes: Haddon Robinson, "More 'Religion', Less Impact;" R.E. Frykenberg, "Rising Expectations Among the World's Poor;" H. Newton Malony, "The Graying of America;" James Earl Massey, "The Coloring of America;" Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, "The End of Female Passivity;" George Marsden, "Secular Humanism *Within* the Church;" Jon Johnston, "Growing Me-ism and Materialism;" Norman Shawchuck and Richard Olson, "Shifting Denominational Power;" Myron S. Augsburg, "Pluralism Gone to Seed;" and Carl F. George, "A Tilt Toward the Relational."

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 47-55.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁵ Mearle Griffith, *A Church for the 21st Century: A Planning Resource for the Future* (Dayton, OH: General Council on Ministries of The United Methodist Church, 1989) p. 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 10ff.

¹⁸ Jack M. Tuell, "Episcopal Address" to the 1988 General Conference of The United Methodist Church, meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, *Daily Christian Advocate* (May 7, 1988), p. 13.

¹⁹ *Into the Next Century*, p. 12.

²⁰ George Barna, *America 2000: What the Trends Mean for Christianity* (Glendale, CA: Barna Research Group, 1989); Everett Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York: The Free Press, 1983); Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Tex Sample, *U.S. Lifestyles and Mainline Churches* (Louisville, KY: The Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990); Robert Theobald, *The Rapids of Change* (Indianapolis, IN: Knowledge Systems, 1987);

²¹ Griffith, *Church for 21st Century*, pp. 1-8.

²² *The Works of John Wesley: Volume 2: Sermons II: 34-70*, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), p. 89. See also A. Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart: John Wesley: Evangelist* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1978).

²³ "Wesley had no place in this company [of systematic thinkers who occupy the front rank], nor did he aspire to one. He was, by talent and intent, a folk-theologian: an eclectic who had mastered the secret of plastic synthesis, simple profundity, the common touch. He was an effective evangelist guided by a discriminating theological understanding, a creative theologian practically involved in the application of his doctrine in the renewal of the church" (Albert C. Outler, *John Wesley* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1964]), p. 119.

²⁴ Albert C. Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville Tidings, 1975), p. 4.

²⁵ Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), p. 42.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

²⁸ Outler, *Theology*, p. 23. See also *The Letters of John Wesley*, ed. John Telford, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 4:146, 237.

²⁹ Outler, *Theology*, p. 72.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 83. See also *The Works of John Wesley: Volume 3: Sermons III: 71-114*, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), p. 189.

³¹ Outler, *Theology*, pp. 84-87.

³² Wood, *Burning Heart*, p. 281

³³ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

³⁴ *Lausanne Occasional Papers: No. 1: The Pasadena Consultation: Homogeneous Unit Principle; No. 2: The Willowbank Report: Gospel and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1978).

³⁵ *Willowbank Report*, pp. 10-11.

³⁶ Melvin L. Hodges, "Creating Climate for Church Growth," in Donald A. McGavran, ed., *Church Growth and Christian Mission* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 27.

CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE: LEADERSHIP IN THE CONGREGATION

Robert C. Anderson

The Nature of the Church

When we are serious about church leadership, we need to study the context in which legitimate ministry occurs and through which leadership guides that ministry. That context is the church, the only lasting, God ordained, biblically supported means for carrying on God's program here on earth. For that reason, I believe it is proper and necessary to begin a book on church leadership by taking a good look at the context of that leadership, the church. Such a study must begin with what the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, has to say about the church and include as well the references to the church in the book of Acts. Jesus mentions the church by name on only two occasions, Matthew 16:18, which deals with Jesus' role in building the church and with the invincibility of the church, and 18:15-17, which deals with discipline in the church. References to the church are made in numerous places in Acts and in the epistles.

The Universal Church Includes All Believers

Jesus' reference to the church in Matthew 16:18 is the only place in Scripture where Jesus speaks directly to the subject of the universal church. His declaration occurs at a high point in his ministry. He has asked His disciples who He really is. In response, Simon Peter fairly blurts out his marvelous confession of faith: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16).

Jesus replies to that declaration by saying, "Blessed are you Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in Heaven" (v. 17). Then he adds, speaking of the institution that will become His earthly body when He returns to heaven, "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it" (v. 18). When

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Jesus promised to build his church He had in mind the adding of men and women who will make up the universal church and the nurturing of them to spiritual maturity. So in this passage He is not speaking of a physical building but is referring to the universal church. That church includes all believers from all of the world for all of history.

The Church Belongs to Christ

With Jesus as the builder, a great responsibility is removed from our shoulders as leaders. He is the major contractor and we are merely His workmen. Instead of having continual worries about the construction, all we are called to do is follow His orders. What a relief! If I had to serve as the builder, I would worry continually about whether the structure was built properly. But I have no need for such worries. He will build His church!

Jesus promises to build *His* church. Aren't you glad it's His church and not yours? If it were your church, you would have to worry about maintaining it. Since it is His, He also becomes the maintenance supervisor. He is responsible for its success or failure. But it won't fail. He has already made that guarantee. Even though local assemblies of believers should cease to function, other assemblies will be raised up in their place. His universal church is certain to succeed.

Moreover when Jesus asserts that it is His church, that establishes Him as head of the church. That leaves no room for church bosses, whether or not they be "bossy": pastors, elders, deacons, or presidents of women's missionary societies. He is the only boss, and He is jealous of His authority. He will not share His headship with anyone.

Just as the universal church belongs only to Jesus, individual assemblies of that church enjoy similar ownership. How terribly debilitating to a local church when it ceases to belong to Jesus and becomes the property of an individual or group.

The church is *Christ's* church. As leaders of individual local churches, let us never forget that.

The Church Is An Irresistible Weapon

Christ's church is an irresistible weapon. That is the meaning of Christ's assertion in Matthew 16:18 that the "gates of Hades" (or 'gates of hell') will not be able to prevail against the church. Some commentators have suggested that Christ was using the phrase "gates of Hades" figuratively to describe death. I do not believe that was the intent of our Lord. Instead, I am convinced that 'gates of Hades' should be used in the literal sense. When we do that, it gives the verse an entirely different and much more powerful meaning.

We think of gates as just standing there. To us they are defensive guards to keep the enemy out, not offensive weapons to overpower him. The one biblical exception we might cite is the story of Samson, who, in his rage

and fury against the Philistines, lifted the gates of a city off their hinges, marched into battle, and, lacking any other weapon, used the gates to beat the Philistines to death. But that is not what Jesus is talking about here. Jesus sees the church as His great and powerful weapon against Satan, and the "Gates of Hell" as Satan's defensive counter-weapon.

As a defensive weapon the "gates of Hades" are not strong enough to contain the church of Jesus Christ. Instead, the church is an irresistible force that will storm the very strongholds of hell. Not even the most formidable defense built by Satan will be able to contain or withstand it.

What a wonderful promise. You are a leader in a winning institution. Jesus absolutely guarantees it. None of your efforts on behalf of the church is in vain as long as they conform to scriptural guidelines and glorify God.

The Church Is An Assembly

To some people "church" is the white frame building in which they spent happy childhood hours. To others, church means a body of believers who worship together on a regular basis. To still others, church is a gigantic socioeconomic system that has its headquarters in Rome, Salt Lake City, or Nashville. The biblical word used to describe Jesus' spiritual body on earth today is *ekklesia*. In its root form it is the combination of two words, *ek*, which means "out," and *kaleo*, "to call." People are "called out" of their normal pursuits to carry on a specific function.

Ekklesia means "an assembly." Robert Saucy reports that in classical Greek usage the word meant "an assembly of citizens summoned by the crier, the legislative assembly."¹ He notes further that in Athens the word *ekklesia* "signified the constitutional assembly which met on previously fixed dates."² In Acts 19, the word is used in the same context to denote first a mob in verse 32, then a lawful assembly in verse 39.

When the Lord used such a common, yet all encompassing, word to describe His strategic, long-range weapon against Satan He may have been saying that within the concept of assembly there is room for far greater diversification and variety than many Christians are willing to admit. There is no biblical prohibition, as far as I can discover, against a highly liturgical type of church group on one hand, the free and spontaneous group on the other, and all the varieties in between. All are possible within the concept of *ekklesia*. Since the Lord has created all of us differently with varying needs, why not use different expressions of the church to meet those needs?

The Lord may also have been warning against the disease of individualism that grips the church today so strongly. The very word *assembly* presupposes that parts are put together to make a usable and useful product. Although the parts are important, the assembled product is what actually accomplishes the job. The computer on which I am writing this book is made up of many component parts. The parts taken individually are incapable of doing much. Only when they are assembled in the proper structure is the mechanism sitting on my desk useful. Likewise, though each member of the Body of Christ may be important, it is only

as an integral part of an assembly that he or she will realize optimal usefulness for Christ.

No person is a church in himself. Saucy, pointing to the work of J. W. Campbell, stresses identity and importance through assembling, saying, "In secular Greek, *ekklesia* refers only to the assembly or meeting and never to the people which compose that assembly. When people are not assembled, they are not considered as composing an *ekklesia*. A new *ekklesia* existed each time people assembled."³

The genius of the Body of Christ as described in 1 Corinthians 12 is that it depends on its assembled parts, not upon each of those parts working by itself. Christians are not complete in themselves. They need each other to make up an intelligible and functioning whole. In a technical sense the church exists when Christians are assembled. In that light, it might be proper to abandon the word sanctuary and use the term assembly hall for the place where the church meets. If the true sanctuary is within the Christian, then Christians are a group of sanctuaries assembling together.

Ekklesia does not require a specific type of place in which to meet. It is wonderful when the assembly can meet in a pleasant and inviting place. Generally it facilitates the program of the church if it has a meeting place of its own to use in carrying out its functions. It can hold church meetings at times convenient to the members, and it does not have to adapt its time schedule to accommodate other users of rented facilities. Nevertheless, it does not take a special kind of building or even a building owned by a congregation to constitute an *ekklesia*. God is in the midst of His church wherever believers are gathered together to accomplish His purposes. *Ekklesia* exists whether Christians congregate in a beautiful, expansive edifice or in a rented school cafeteria.

The Church Is A Living Organism

The Bible describes the church a living organism. This is a hard concept for some people to understand. How can a group of people assemble in a given place and, all of a sudden, become a living organism? For something like that to happen is nothing short of miraculous. Exactly! That is the essence and genius of the local church as the New Testament pictures it.

"But that doesn't make sense," you may say. "Why would God select an organism rather than an organization to accomplish His purpose on earth? After all, organizations are much more efficient." Humanly speaking, you have a point. Were I, in my limited wisdom, to have chosen a plan for redeeming the world, I would probably have chosen an organization. Organizations can move quickly and decisively. If people get in the way, they are removed. Organizations are likely to look at things objectively and factually. When the organization no longer serves its intended function, it can be terminated quickly and with little pain. But God did not choose an organization to save the world from sin. He chose an incarnation. This plan must have been very important to God, because it was immensely costly to Him.

First, it cost the life of His only Son. From then on, the cost has been the suffering and death of generations of His adopted sons and daughters, who, like Paul, have been able to say, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions" (Colossians 1:24). And what is lacking in Christ's afflictions? Nothing, except their application to each subsequent generation. This is accomplished through the afflictions of Christians, which they, like Paul, endure cheerfully for Christ's sake.

There is an important philosophical distinction between viewing the church as an organism rather than an organization. As leaders, it is important that we grasp this distinction so that we may carry on our ministry in a biblical manner. Lawrence Richards has been one of the most important sources in helping church leaders understand the significance of this most basic concept. He writes:

While secular management theorists have attempted to treat the organization and administration of institutions using the analogy of an organism, these attempts have failed for a simple reason. An organism is by its nature an entity with a single will. That single will is transmitted from the head to the various parts of the body so that a coordinated response to the environment may be made.⁴

It is this single will that is necessary to get the job done. When an assembly lacks this single will, or the concept of a single will breaks down, the organism begins to disintegrate. In an organization, leaders impose their will from the top down to their employees. In an organism, leaders have no will of their own. They, along with the members of the congregation who are believer-priests, are merely to seek the will of the Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is as they carry out His will that the organism flourishes.

Jerry Wofford and Kenneth Kilinski write:

The church of today is failing to fulfill its purpose largely because it has ceased to be an organism. A church in which one person preaches, a few teach, and a few others work in an administrative ministry, but the vast majority simply listen, learn and follow without becoming functioning members of the body, is not an integrated organism. . . . In the face of the demands of today's society, the survival of the church is dependent upon its being "fitted and held" together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part to fulfill its purposes in Christ.⁵

These men are alluding to 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. There Paul outlines what should be three of the most important features of the organism called the church.

Unity

The first of these features is unity. After stating in verse 24 that God has combined the members of the body and has given even "more abundant honor to that member which lacked," Paul goes on in verse 25 to tell why. It is "so that there should be no division in the body."

The unity he is talking about is not the organizational unity sought by ecumenical movements today. Nor is it a unity that demands that every one think and act exactly alike. It is a unity built out of the respect of one part of the body for another part. It is a unity based upon the fact that in the Body of Christ, everyone is important and honored by God.

Sometimes we leaders forget this. In our enthusiasm to carry out the leadership function to which God has called us we get caught up in a false sense of our own importance. Or we listen more closely to the opinions expressed by the "beautiful" people in our congregation, those whose speech, appearance, or dress are the most impressive. We may take action more quickly in response to the demands of the movers and shakers in our congregation than to the wishes of the rank and file. When we ignore or listen less carefully to the opinions of the poor, the aged, those who are divorced, children, and others who do not meet the corporate image we expect, we miss the point of this passage. Paul is telling us that God has given more honor to the rank and file, to the otherwise unnoticed members of our congregation, to those we see as less beautiful or important. He has done that for a specific reason, "That there should be no division in the body" (v. 25).

How important is unity to our Savior? It is of such importance that one of the major desires Christ expresses to the Father in His high priestly prayer in John 17:21 is "that they may all be one, even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us." In this prayer, Jesus notes the reason for this wish: "That the world may believe that Thou didst send Me."

The credibility of the Christian message in the eyes of the world depends on unity among Christians. This unity, John 17:21 says, stems from the fact that Christians are already in unity with the Father and the Son. Only when we are in the right relationship with the Lord will we be able to be in the right relationship with each other. In turn, when we are in right relationship with one another, we will become credible witnesses to the world.

What about church splits? By a church split I do not mean an instance where an assembly amiably agrees to establish a daughter church. Every church should be engaged in such church-planting ministries. It is the essence of effective activity against Satan. By church splits I refer to those occasions when there is disunity among the people in an assembly. Hard feelings occur, factions develop, and a group decides to leave the church and form a new one. When such a move is made in a spirit of anger, the end product is always undesirable. God desires His church to function in a spirit of unity. When disunity occurs and His church is fractured, it always grieves His heart.

Moreover, since it is our ability to love each other and to work with each other that makes us a credible witness for Christ in the community, it follows that the inability of Christians to get along with one another destroys that credibility. Church splits always leave an unmistakable stench in the community that lasts for years. No matter that two good churches may eventually result from such splits. God is able to bring order out of chaos and success out of disaster. The Bible makes clear that God does not want to perform this service. He would rather see amicable behavior on the part of Christians and a church that functions in love and unity than have to pick up the pieces left by a fractured church.

Leader, God calls you to a ministry of unifying, not dividing, the church. Do everything in your power to respect and honor all of the members of the body and to preserve the unity our Lord longs to see.

Concern for One Another

The second essential ingredient called for in 1 Corinthians 12 is mutual concern. In sharp contrast to the lack of unity warned against in the first part of v. 25, the second part of the verse says, "but that the members should have the same care for one another."

We need an extended family concept to produce a caring church. Caring is more than an attitude. It means putting action to our feelings. It means meeting people's physical and emotional needs as well as their spiritual and social needs.

The Bible commands us to help those who are in need. It is bad enough to see a stranger in need, have the wherewithal to help him, and yet not do so. When the person in need is a member of one's own family, it is inexcusable not to help him. First Timothy 5:8 says, "If anyone does not provide for his own [his relatives], and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever." The principle applies even more strongly to our spiritual families. It is wrong to know that there is a person in need within our congregation and yet neglect to respond to that need.

First Timothy 5:8 does not necessarily refer to those who are destitute because they continually make poor choices, are irresponsible, or refuse to help themselves. Later in the chapter Paul says that even the widows are to live up to certain responsibilities: "But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God" (v. 4). In verse 6 he makes a strong statement against indolence, saying, "But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives."

Nor does caring for others mean the endless distribution of charity doled to people who have little intention of helping themselves. It means that we provide every care necessary for people who are industrious and conscientious but are temporarily down.

Caring for my Christian brother may not be convenient for me. It may make an appreciable difference in my lifestyle. Nevertheless, in the sight

of God, I have no alternative. The loving, truly caring church is a congregation that takes action in behalf of its people. People get to know each other, care for each other, and keep track of each other. They learn one another's needs. As a result, the church functions as a true living organism: "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

Diversity

How dull a local church would be if everybody in it were exactly alike. God does not run a franchise operation. He deals in originals. There are no clones in His kingdom, only first editions. As leaders, a major problem can occur when, in our enthusiasm to meet our goals, we try to turn everyone in our congregation into a clone to accomplish the job exactly as we would.

Diversity as God's glorious, creative gift to the church is the theme of verses 1 Corinthians 12:17-20. In verse 19 Paul says, "And if they were all one member, where would the body be?" He has already written in verse 17, "If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be?"

The combined and concerted effort of all the members God has placed within the Body of Christ is necessary for the proper functioning of the body. We need each other, and we need each other's differences. Leaders need to remember that each person is unique. The functions of all the members of the body are needed as are their ideas. Different people who look at things from different perspectives can keep the church from making serious blunders. Utilize the diverse giftedness of your people, and thank the Lord for diversity. Celebrate differences and capitalize on them for strength. Do this even if it means throwing out the traditional agenda and opting for an entirely new approach, one that matches the abilities of the people God has sent to your church.

Rejoice in the people the Lord has sent you as members. Identify what those people are in the body. Are they hands, feet, eyes, or what? Utilize them according to their identity, and on that basis determine how your church will evangelize the lost and edify the saints. That is a vastly different philosophy from merely choosing programs and then trying to find people who can fill the slots in those programs. Subsequent chapters will deal more fully with the establishment and reaching of goals and objectives for your church.

Identifying the Primary Mission of the Church

The primary purpose of the church is to glorify God. The Scriptural evidence that this is so is overwhelming. What does *glorify* mean? I like to define it in this way: "to draw attention to God's glory." But what do we mean by "God's glory"? God's glory is all that He is and does, His essence. To glorify God is "to enhance His reputation."

Everything we do and say as individual Christians and as assemblies of believers should enhance God's reputation. If His esteem is not enhanced by our attitudes and conduct, both individually and corporately, then we

are out of line. We are thinking and acting improperly.

How much pain could be avoided if individual Christians and local churches gauged their activities against the standard of enhancing God's reputation. We would then have answers to all kinds of questions that face us as leaders.

How does the church glorify God? It does so through evangelism and edification. To accomplish those tasks, a church constructs goals (which are, as we learned earlier, articulations of "a state of being toward which [it is] heading. "A goal must be built upon a purpose. Our evangelistic and edificational goals should be built upon the purpose of the church, "to glorify God."

Evangelism Defined

Throughout this book I will be referring often to evangelism and edification. At this point, however, I would like to comment briefly each and show how they are inextricably linked.

Broadly defined, evangelism can be described as *all efforts directed toward leading a person to commit his life to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and become a productive, reproducing member of a local church.* Those efforts may include witnessing, nurturing (providing a cup of cold water, food, shelter, clothing, and medical or financial help in Jesus' name), instruction, persuasion, and encouragement.

Edification Defined

Edification may be described as *all efforts directed toward building mature, reproducing believers and churches.* One of the root words of the term is *oikos*, a "house." Edification is the act of building a "house not made with hands." Since it is the Lord's house we are building we must insure that both the materials and workmanship are of top quality. No second-rate materials or shoddy methods of construction will do.

Evangelism and edification are linked. Evangelism has a strong edificational element to it. How impatient I am with people who think that the job is done once a person commits his life to Christ. In reality, at that point the work is only partially completed. Some of the toughest work is ahead.

When we hear of a mother who abandons her child after birth, we say that this is "child abuse," a tragic situation. Similarly, it is "child abuse" for the church to fail to nurture and instruct a baby Christian. With that thought bearing upon my conscience, I constructed my definition of evangelism with the end product in mind. From the beginning, as we work to win someone to Christ, we must remember what God wants the new believer to be—a mature, productive member of a local assembly of believers.

Look again at my definition of edification. You will notice an evangelistic dimension. One of the marks of a physically mature human is the ability to reproduce. We never know if that person has the ability, however, until a baby results. Similarly, one of the marks of a mature Christian is the ability to reproduce. However, once again, we can never tell if a person

or church is able to reproduce spiritually until spiritual babies result.

The process is designed to continue indefinitely. The problem is that it is frequently interrupted. Therefore, it is a continual challenge to a church to watch the process carefully and get it back on track when it falters. Only as we keep the cycle going will we be able to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord.

One more observation. We must work constantly to see that the two emphases are balanced. That's not easy because the human tendency is to swing from one extreme to the other. Sometimes that is unavoidable. There are times when pressing issues demand the majority of our attention. We must remember, however, that when a pendulum of a clock sticks in either extreme position, the clock stops.

Likewise, when the church gets stuck in either evangelism or edification, it stops. Its forward momentum is halted. A faithful leader sees to it that the pendulum gets going again and the program of the church returns to balance. That is one of the toughest, yet most important, tasks for which God holds leaders accountable.

A Balanced Evangelistic View

There are three evangelistic emphases for which the church is responsible: local outreach, regional outreach, and global outreach.

Local Outreach

How it would please our Lord if our churches had such a steady flux of new converts that the baptistries had to be maintained full and heated at all times. Instead, many churches have to clean out the cobwebs before they can turn on the faucet and fill the tank.

Here and there are a few bright lights. Many of these are new churches. Find out who they are in your community. Visit them and learn what they are doing. If they are truly evangelical in their doctrine, don't be sidetracked because they don't agree with you on every peripheral matter. Make sure that your church recaptures a biblical emphasis on local outreach and gets the pendulum swinging in that direction once again.

Regional Outreach

Statistics are impressive. New churches are the most effective way to extend the kingdom of God. They are also more efficient in the amount of effort needed to bring a person to Christ. Church groups that plant few churches will experience little or no growth. We have to continually plant new churches just to keep up with the number of old churches that are dying each year.

New churches are a wonderful place to utilize younger, more non-traditional leaders. Here they can establish traditions of their own, for there is no need to perpetuate stereotypes of worship service formats or methods.

A new church is the ideal place to attract the unchurched who are unreached because they have given up on what is to them the stodgy, established church.

Global Outreach

A strong emphasis on what used to be called missions is an underlying assumption in this book. That does not mean, however, that global outreach should take precedence over the local and regional outreach ministries. All three must all work in concert if the evangelistic mission of the church is to be carried on effectively. The challenge for the effective leader is to maintain the balance of emphasis consistently.

A Balanced Edificatory View

Worship

Nothing we do as a church is more important than worship. Public worship is and should be the essence of body life. Because we are directing our praise to Almighty God, our worship should be carried out in the most tasteful, imaginative, and professional way possible. However, our determination to do things properly should not detract from our entering into worship wholeheartedly.

For some persons, worship is important and unique enough for it to be given a separate classification of its own along with evangelism and edification. I have listed it under edification because it is impossible for a person to truly worship without his being edified.

Discipleship

The word *discipleship* per se does not appear in the Bible. However, we are told in the Great Commission that we are to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). A disciple is most commonly defined as a "follower." Once a person takes the initial step in the path of discipleship, commitment of his life to Jesus, then we are to baptize him and teach him "all things" that Jesus has commanded.

What a comprehensive job. In relation to the local church, I define discipleship as *the sum total of the church's educational efforts*.

Fellowship

Discipleship involves fellowship. Fellowship is an important aspect of the Christian life. The trouble is that fellowship doesn't occur automatically. It must be fostered and encouraged. Most churches have a great many social activities. Few churches have an overall plan to use social activities to foster a life of genuine fellowship among members.

Fellowship has a nurturing dimension as well. When we are truly fellowshiping with people, we are aware of their needs. Those needs may be physical, psychological, emotional, or spiritual. Once we know a person's needs, we can then provide from our own assets or employ the total

resources of the congregation to meet those needs. Out of the abundance God gives to each of us, we have an obligation to take care of our Christian brothers and sisters.

Logistics

In addition to the six basic tasks listed above (local, regional, and global outreach; worship, discipleship, and fellowship) there is a seventh challenge: logistics, which includes finances, supplies, and buildings. Logistics is the component that enables us to accomplish the other six objectives effectively.

The seven tasks listed above should be the focal points of the church's ministry. They are not simply nice things; they are necessary. Each of them is on the "must" list of the New Testament.

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Discipleship: The Equipping Tool

Discipleship is the sum total of the church's educational efforts. It is an equipping task involving three emphases: one-on-one, one-on-a-few (Bible classes and study groups), and one-on-many (the pulpit teaching ministry).

A discipleship program should provide equipping for every member of the church. It should be a coordinated program integrated into the fiber of the church and run by an individual given the responsibility of its coordination.

The word *discipleship* per se is never mentioned in Scripture. We are told merely to "make disciples." In the early church, that was an "all hands on deck" proposition. The total resources of the church were concentrated on the one project. It must be so today as well. The total job of making disciples is far too large and complex a job for one person.

When we concentrate only on one-on-one methods, we risk establishing a "guru" mentality in the minds of the disciple and the discipler. Through the years I have discipled many people on a one-on-one basis, but I have always done my best to avoid making anyone "my" disciple. Even the thought terrorizes me. We are only to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Only He is truly worthy of being followed on a consistent and prolonged basis.

Where does the one-on-one discipleship method work the best? It is a necessity with new believers. Usually, the best person to disciple a new convert is the one who led him to Christ. That is not always possible, however. Sometimes the most "unlikely" people act as evangelists. In that case, the evangelist may need someone with more competence to help him disciple the new convert. However, at least in the early stages of the discipling process, it is good for the evangelist to meet with the disciple and discipler.

It is not the task of the discipler to make the disciple dependent upon him. His challenge is to disciple in such a way as to make his role obsolete. Just as a child is taught to be more and more independent as he

approaches adulthood, so a disciple should be weaned away from his discipler. The discipler then becomes a lifelong friend and resource, and disciple is freed to take the necessary steps toward Christian maturity.

Other prominent candidates for one-on-one discipleship are people who are facing severe troubles or who have habits they find hard to overcome. Even here, it is not the role of the discipler to establish a lifelong dependency relationship. That is ultimately harmful to the disciple.

Teenagers respond well to one-on-one discipling. Often a "neutral," more objective adult can help a teenager through a difficult period with greater understanding than can his parents. Sometimes another adult can see potential in a teenager that his parents fail to see. The discipling of teens often may result in the teen's committing his life to a church vocation.

It is helpful for responsible adults to establish discipling relations with single parents or children of single parents. In most cases, it is proper only for the discipler to disciple someone of his same gender. Brand-new pastors may want to be disciplined by a godly saint who has had a great deal of experience with the integral workings of the church. Of course, one-on-one discipling is never one-sided. Both the disciple and discipler are constantly in a learning mode.

What about curriculum for this kind of discipling? Organizations such as The Navigators and Campus Crusade for Christ have discipling materials useful in teaching people the basics of the Christian walk.

The amount of formal curriculum used will differ markedly with the situation. Before prescribing more content, we need to ask ourselves, "To what sources of content is this person already exposed? How extensive is this content? In what essential areas is the content weak?" On the basis of that assessment we will vary the amount of content assigned to the disciple. If he is already being bombarded with content, little more is needed. Then the task of the discipler is to help the disciple apply what he is studying. On the other hand, if the content is incomplete and deficient in some vital area, the discipler will want to supplement that content.

I have already stated my conviction that really successful discipling is built upon a fellowship base. Sometimes the role of the discipler will be principally that of fellowship. Out of that fellowship will arise vital questions. Then the discipler can exercise his most effective role.

Fellowship: The Sustaining Blessing

"If I weren't a Christian, I don't know how I would survive a time like this. My Christian brothers and sisters have been wonderful." How often have you heard someone say something like that? At the core of the benefits realized through the Christian life are precious relationships among Christians. Those relationships need to be encouraged and nurtured by each church. That needs to be done on a systematic, coordinated basis so that nobody "slips through the cracks."

The church fellowship program also needs to include a shepherding system that keeps close tabs on people. We are responsible for our people. We need to know their needs so that we may minister to those needs. The

world says, "Don't get involved with people," but the Christian must become a "holy busybody," for he is, indeed, his brother's keeper.

In addition to the array of social occasions churches use to foster fellowship between people are two other important vehicles for building close relationships: (1) the made-to-order structure that emerges naturally out of the boards, committees, and ministry tasks in which a church engages and (2) the effective fellowship structure that emerges from the common tasks Sunday school teachers, youth sponsors, church ushers, and others, share. These natural groupings will not automatically produce deep relationships. The church must deliberately build into every board and committee of the church a fellowship emphasis. Board or committee members should also be taught to assume a certain degree of responsibility for fellow members and should begin to look out for each other's needs. The same should be true of persons engaged in special church tasks. Since they have similar interests, they should be encouraged to build deep, lasting relationships among themselves.

Other ready-made fellowship opportunities may be found among adult classes, "special need" groups, church athletic teams, ushers, and those who attend church repair days. Some churches construct intricate care group systems or home Bible study groups that function as care groups. Such groups are fine for those who are not ordinarily involved in some kind of ministry activity, but problems arise when people are expected to relate to those groups in addition to serving on boards and committees. High worker turnover results. The church is simply wearing out its people by imposing unrealistic expectations.

To avoid placing unreasonable demands on people, build a fellowship foundation on existing groups. Then consider those who are not yet involved in a group and make a number of group options available to them. Another word of warning. Don't expect everyone automatically to flock to home Bible studies or care groups. Some people simply do not like such activities. Remember, also, that substantive learning and fellowship may occur even through such "extraordinary" groups as softball teams. The trick is to program deliberately to see that this is done.

A number of tools facilitate fellowship. Unfortunately for those of us who gain weight easily, food is one of the best. Many times when food is served in connection with some routine meeting of a committee or other group, it greatly enhances the possibility of genuine fellowship occurring. Don Bubna muses, "For as long as I can remember, I have had the idea that eating with people is a great way to make friends. Some of my happiest memories from childhood are of a steady stream of guests at our table."

In addition to its ready-made opportunities for fostering fellowship among people through groups, the church should take formal steps to encourage one-on-one fellowship. It might survey the congregation and find people with common interests and abilities and then devise ways of bringing those people together in meaningful relationships. Many people too shy to be a member of a group will blossom when they find a close personal friend. What better place to find that friend than in the church?

Earlier I discussed the need for the church to make use of "holy busybodies" so that fellow Christians may be aware of the needs of people. To do this, I suggest the employment of "deacon people." These people need not necessarily be members of the deacon board. In fact, it is better if they are not.

A member of the church board, however, should coordinate the activities of these deacon-type people. He should meet with them regularly to find out which members and friends of the church they would like to be responsible for. Then he can assign a reasonable number of people to each deacon's shepherding group. The groups may vary in size according to the time each deacon has available, though five families is probably the maximum number that should be assigned to any deacon. If a deacon experiences difficulty communicating with an individual, that individual should be assigned a different deacon.

The primary responsibility of the fellowship deacons (both male and female) is to look for the welfare needs of the congregation but particularly of their assigned people. They should be required to contact each family or individual for whom they are responsible at least once a week. They may do that in a conversation at church, through a phone call, or in a personal visit. If a person on their list is a shut-in, a personal visit is especially appropriate.

As their people identify needs, the fellowship deacons should take steps to meet those needs. If they have the necessary resources to meet the needs themselves, they should do so. Otherwise, they should call in reinforcements through the director of fellowship ministries. Nobody should be allowed to fall through the cracks. There should be continual contact with all the members of the church on a regular basis. The fellowship deacons become the heart of the church's counseling program.

As extraordinary needs surface (hospitalization, for instance), they should be brought to the attention of the pastor so that he can minister in his special way, visiting the persons experiencing the need and praying for them. The deacon, in turn, should call on the extended resources of the church body to provide for the family's physical needs while their loved one is in the hospital. When the counseling need is over his head, the fellowship deacon seeks the resources of someone with more training. Counseling needs often arise out of fellowship and many times require discipleship to satisfy those needs.

Christian fellowship should be one of the greatest fringe benefits of the Christian life. Yet many Christians do not experience that type of fellowship because no one in the church makes it happen. Let your church be a sterling exception to this neglectful condition.

A Cup of Cold Water in Jesus' Name

So far we have looked at edificational goals. Before I move to evangelism I want to consider an area toward which the edificational and evangelistic resources of the church should focus: ministry to the poor. Christians are becoming aware that our Lord places a great responsibility on us to

minister to the poor, and evangelicals in particular have been criticized by some for ignoring the plight of the poor. Fortunately, this is an unfounded allegation. In a conversation with George Gallup, Jr., some time ago, he told me that evangelicals have a far better record of ministering to the poor than do the liberals. It may be that whereas the liberals are vocal about the needs of the poor, they believe that government should be the great benefactor. Evangelicals, on the other hand, may not talk about the subject much but give their alms in secret, knowing that the Rewarder sees.

Because evangelicals are faithful to this responsibility does not mean that they have arrived. There is plenty of room for us to step up our activities to meet the needs around us. Our first responsibility is to the poor within our midst. Again, the key is for an effective deacon system through which special needs can be identified.

It is inexcusable for a church to have a family in its midst that does not have adequate food and shelter. Those are the basics. The church needs to take any step it feels necessary to remedy the situation. There are sensible ways of approaching the problem. Some people are in desperate need because they have acted unwisely. As we help them it is important that we not encourage them to continue to act unwisely. Here we can use the talents of financial counselors to help people put their fiscal affairs in order. The best advice they may need is to drive an older car, live in a less prestigious house, or prepare less costly but nutritional meals. If they are unemployed, perhaps the church can call upon its collective resources to find employment for them.

The church probably has a special maintenance fund, but instead of doling out money to people, it may want to ask that the people they are helping take temporary employment at the church. They do not need to be given a "grungy," janitorial job. Use their gifts and talents. If they are capable of office work, let them help in that way. In most churches there is plenty of backlog. Carpenters, plumbers, landscapers, counselors, painters—you name the vocation, and there will probably be a need for it. Some people can even be used effectively as visitors to shut-ins and those hospitalized.

At times, aid may take the form of temporary housing provided by a member of the church. However, there should be a clear understanding that this is to last only so long. Meanwhile, they will be expected to make new arrangements.

A principal need may be for temporary transportation or babysitting services while the parents look for a job. A more desperate need may be for someone to pay the rent or the utilities bill for a month or so until the family gets on its feet financially. Each church should have special funds set aside for that purpose. This is not an option. We are given the responsibility to take care of our own.

Our church takes a "deacon offering" after every communion service. However, often needs exceed funds, and additional financial appeals are directed toward our congregation. Sometimes one of our own is in need and we don't even hear about it. Some "anonymous" person pays the rent

or utility bill, or stocks the family with groceries. We also maintain a "closet" where clean, attractive clothes are available to people in need.

In our city a group of churches has pooled available skills. When a member of any of those churches needs help but cannot afford it, he calls the coordinator of the program. Carpenters, plumbers, electricians, car mechanics, and numbers of other kinds of specialty people are on call. Often those artisans and craftsmen are retired people who want to use their skills to the glory of God.

Most important of all is food. In no case should anyone go hungry. Surely with everything the Lord has given to us, we can find enough money to provide food for those in need. It doesn't have to be T-bone steak as long as it is tasty, filling, and nutritious. Many churches in Portland maintain food pantries. Periodically church members are asked to bring certain kinds of food to restock it. Other churches maintain food funds. As needs surface, they direct people to certain food markets where the church has accounts. People are given a certain limit to spend and are allowed to select the foods they want.

But this is not only the responsibility of the church. Each Christian should ask the Lord what is expected of him individually. During my childhood many of the homeless were called "bums" or "hoboes." Some passed through our community on a regular basis. Word seems to have got around that our house was a place to get a free meal, because frequently we would find one of these people knocking on our door. Despite the fact that we were poor ourselves, my mother never turned anyone away hungry. She always prepared a simple but nutritious hot meal for them. I wonder how many times we fed the Lord in disguise.

Earlier in this book I spoke to the issue of ministering to the aid of the unsaved poor. When a "cup of cold water," food, or shelter is given in Jesus' name, the person receiving it should have no doubt in whose name it was given. When a person comes to us for material help, we should share the gospel without being pushy or using evangelical cliches. It is then the person's responsibility as to whether or not he receives the message.

One more word about meeting the needs of the poor. It is important that it be done in such a way as to help them lift themselves out of their poverty. Too many economic assistance programs have encouraged people to perpetuate their plight. Where possible, do not give money. Give food, provide shelter, fill the gas tank, pay the rent, give them clothing. At the same time, counsel them concerning God's love and tell them that Christians care about them. Help them find employment or employ them temporarily to work around the church. Take advantage of the opportunity by living your Christian life as they work side by side with you.

In some cases, they need training to qualify for a job. If you can secure funds to provide that training, that may be a good way to minister. Perhaps a member of the congregation could provide child care during the process. Use every opportunity to share Christ. Remember, their most basic needs are spiritual ones. Work to solve those needs, and the other solutions will fall into place.

Local Evangelism: New Blood for the Church

Nothing will revitalize a church more quickly than the inclusion of new Christians into the fellowship. Why do we evangelize? We do so because our Lord commands it and because it is so good for the church. Evangelism is so vital that a church which is not evangelizing may expect to die.

Returning to an evangelistically oriented service as a method of evangelism, may, on the surface, seem easy: "All we have to do is use evangelistic songs and have the pastor preach an evangelistic message." Unfortunately, that is not the way it is to be done. A contemporary evangelistic service must take a different form if it is to appeal to the unchurched. The problem is that, if done properly, such a service has the potential for offending many of the established saints.

What should the format be, and when should the service be held? Though most Christians affirm the need for evangelism, many would object to giving up their customary time of worship, the sacrosanct 11:00 a.m. hour on Sunday. As a result, in an established church, an evangelistic service that will reach the unchurched may need to be conducted at other than the usual Sunday morning hour or at a location other than the sanctuary. Here we encounter bad news and good news. The bad news is that studies show that if the unchurched were to attend church they would probably choose the 11:00 a.m. hour. The good news is that you don't have to use the main auditorium for your evangelistic service. In fact, the auditorium may be so churchy in appearance that it would scare the unchurched away.

There are all kinds of alternatives for scheduling and facilities. Find a time when it is convenient for your target audience, not one that suits your church's stereotype. Use a facility in which the unchurched will feel comfortable. That may be a large classroom or a social facility. Make the setting as unchurchy as possible. Allow people to indulge in refreshments all during the program. Remember, this is not a church service per se. It is an evangelistic meeting.

The music should be contemporary and the message unmistakably evangelistic. Instruments could include electronic pianos, synthesizers, guitars, and maybe even drums. Don't major on congregational singing because non-Christians, by and large, do not sing. After all, what do they have to sing about? The majority of the music should be in the form of musical ministry by singers and instrumentalists who are skilled in the more contemporary forms of Christian music. Do not let it get out of hand, however. Instruct the musicians that they are to minister, not perform. Moreover, they are to minister with dignity and restraint. Do not use a vocalist whose words cannot be understood or who has a tendency to scream. Do not allow instrumentalists to drown out the message of the song.

Messages should be geared to the needs of the people but be biblically oriented. After all, it is only the Bible that has decisive solutions to all of life's problems. All messages should be short and to the point. They should be couched in language the audience understands and not in theological jargon. Each message should end by proclaiming Jesus Christ

as the ultimate answer and by encouraging people to commit their lives to Him.

Although an invitation should always be extended, it need not necessarily be accompanied by seven verses of "Just As I Am." Indication of need may be expressed by such a simple thing as having a person take off his name tag and give it to the pastor at the door. Follow-up by the pastor or a member of the church's evangelistic team may be made at a social hour following the service or in the person's home. There another clear presentation of the gospel and an invitation to commitment can be given. Public expression of faith can follow later through baptism and other means of personal testimony.

Careful attention should be given to publicizing the service so that there is a constant flow of unsaved people attending. That may be done through the regular use of attractively prepared bulk mailings. It may also be done through personal invitations given by members of your church who are reluctant to share their faith but who do not mind inviting a friend to this "unusual" service.

I am convinced that the plan of salvation should be presented in some form at all public services of the church, not just special evangelistic services, and that people need to be given the opportunity to respond in some way to that invitation.

A public evangelistic approach is not enough, however. People respond best to the witness of Christians. Therefore, ways must be explored by which to increase the number of contact hours between Christians and "pre-Christians," especially those in the targeted groups.

Who are the best people to employ in the task of evangelism? Those who are new Christians. They are not yet aware that many established Christians view the sharing of one's faith as uncouth. In addition, they have the largest circle of non-Christian relatives and friends. Many of them are not at all reluctant to invite those relatives and friends to an evangelistic service or home Bible study where the gospel is clearly presented. They are still at the point where they are "bubbly" in their faith but cannot begin to answer the hard questions. Employ them in the evangelistic process, but give them plenty of backup.

Does that mean that the entire ministry of evangelism should be done by the newly converted? What a shame if that were the case. Imagine the tragedy of keeping established Christians from the thrill of helping to give birth to a baby Christian. I have suggested that we begin a program of evangelism using new Christians because that is the easiest way to proceed. How do we go about the tougher job of getting established Christians involved? First, we must analyze what they need. Are they biblically grounded so that they can explain and defend the plan of salvation adequately in a personal encounter? If not, such grounding can be done in sermons, Sunday school classes, and special courses set up for that purpose.

How about methodology? Are they aware of the "plans" of salvation available for their use? Are they able to use any of the evangelistic tools

that are so readily available? Again, they can be taught those things in special classes.

What if they know about these things, have gone through the training, and still are not active witnesses? Then we are faced with an attitudinal rather than a content problem. Do you remember how to work in harmony with the Holy Spirit to change people's attitudes? Now may be a good time for you to review chapter 13.

So far we have discussed using evangelistic services, evangelistic home Bible studies, and individual sharing of one's faith as viable approaches in a program of local church evangelism. Earlier I also discussed the use of Bible clubs as an evangelistic tool for reaching families. These are conventional methods appropriate to contemporary conventional people.

But what about unconventional people? As the church has the ability, it needs to investigate needs and find out what resources are available to minister to those needs. A resulting method for reaching people might be a series of classes in parenting for single parents. Such classes would be structured in such a way that they answered not only the questions posed but presented the gospel in a clear manner. A pressing need expressed to one church was to help people cope with the problems resulting from divorce. Many people attended the resulting classes and some of those people received Christ as their Savior.

A church in the Midwest is finding its best ministry among recovering drug addicts. Along with the emotional and psychological support these people need, the gospel is clearly presented. Many of them have begun a new life in Christ.

Here in Portland, a youth pastor felt a great burden for kids on skate boards. He found out that there was no safe place for them to skate. Viewing the large parking lot of his church, he enlisted volunteer carpenters to construct ramps. He carefully checked the church's insurance policy and then proceeded. On certain nights, the parking lot became "Skate Church." Kids were free to come and skate, but they were required to listen to a gospel message in return. "Skate Church" won numbers of teenagers who would have never attended a conventional church. Many of those teens now attend his church regularly.

In beginning an evangelistic program, don't start off with a bang that becomes a whimper. Begin with a spark that eventually bursts into flame. Start slowly and surely. When you begin, you may not even want to involve other church members. You may choose to begin an evangelistic Bible study in the home of one of your neighbors. Then, when they come to Christ, you can encourage them to share their testimony in your worship service. Begin to work with them on their extended network of friends, relatives, and fellow workers. As those people also are assimilated into your church, have them share their testimony as well. Instruct the new-found Christians that they will find some aspects of your church service to be strange, but better days are coming.

By this time, other church members will want to become part of the process. Place serious training demands on them. Make them give up their other church jobs and work only in evangelism. Remember, they are the

ones who are asking you. You didn't approach them to do this. Make participation in evangelism a highly desirable ministry in your church. Make those who become involved in it sacrifice for the privilege of participating.

By now, you may have enough momentum to begin evangelistic services. Employ your new converts to take part in the work involved in these services, including publicity tasks, ushering, and refreshment preparation. Encourage them to invite their unchurched friends. There are many creative ways in which the unchurched can be reached. Some churches have utilized all kinds of banquets, teas, and other social events geared to target groups. Christian Women's Clubs are past mistresses of using special features that attract women. At each event, they have been careful to share the gospel and give an invitation.

Similar events using athletic or outdoor themes have been used to attract men. One church tells the men in its community, "On Super Bowl Sunday, bring a six-pack of pop at 2:00 p.m. We will supply the large screen TV and all the hamburgers and hot dogs you can eat." This is used to bridge the gap between church members and the unchurched. There is no limit to creativity in using all kinds of viable events to bridge gaps and share Christ. What about the timid people who steadfastly avoid sharing their faith or even avoid inviting someone to an evangelistic event? Don't make them feel like spiritual lepers. Make them feel part of the evangelistic process by encouraging them to do something that is not threatening. Perhaps they could cook the hamburgers or help prepare mailings. Studies show that when the support of people is enlisted in even the smallest, most non-threatening way, they are more apt to take the next step and do something that is bolder. When people are made to feel that they are part of the evangelistic team in even the smallest way, they will begin to share the victory. Who knows, eventually so much excitement may build that they may find it impossible to resist getting more actively involved.

Let's Pause a Moment

Instead of suggesting that you begin with a large-scale program, I have encouraged you to start in a modest fashion. Develop one program at a time, and then add new programs as they are needed and can be supported both financially and staff-wise. You don't have to do everything at once. In fact, it is better that you don't. Get each new program fine-tuned and running smoothly before you add anything else. Then, as you have the financial and people resources, launch into something new. Now let's look at area in which a church can work cooperatively with other churches.

Church Planting: The Finest Church Growth Tool

The statistics are impressive. New churches win people to Christ in far greater number than established ones. They also grow faster. Do not take it for granted that because there are already large numbers of churches

in a community that God's job is being done. Consider the large number of people who are not being reached by any church. That is the group we are after. To win them we have to plant a church that will minister uniquely to their needs. We can't franchise churches. It doesn't work.

There are many church planting opportunities within your "Judea." Some of those opportunities are among people just like those in your church but many of them are among ethnic or minority people. Whatever your target group, it is important that your church participate in some way in the rewarding work of church planting.

For such an endeavor it is helpful to belong to a fellowship of churches. So much more can be done when churches band together and pool their resources. Perhaps your church will not be able to help finance a new church. However, there are many other ways you can aid a new work. Consistent, organized corporate prayer is the most important way. Intercessory prayer for the church's leaders is especially important. In the preparatory stages, maybe some of your people can help put together mailings. Or perhaps you will be called upon to help with a telemarketing program, where people in the target community are polled as to whether or not they are interested in a new church. As the church nears the stage of holding public meetings, some of your people may agree to attend, serve, and give for a period of six months to a year. Do you have any surplus musicians? The new church may find them helpful. A church in Portland that has a large music program regularly "farms out" its musicians to minister in smaller churches.

If the church is located fairly close to yours, plan to conduct joint events together. Get to know the people who attend there. Participate in pulpit exchanges so that the pastor of the church can keep you informed as to how it is progressing. Designate one of your church members to keep track of what is going on at the new church. Have him report all important developments to your people. As the new church grows large enough to erect a building, perhaps some of craftsmen and others from your church can donate their services.

If this is an ethnic church, it would enrich your people to learn of the customs, foods, and unique personality factors of these people. See that invitations are extended back and forth. Broaden your horizons.

More than anything else, constantly keep your people informed of what the Lord is doing in and through these new sister works. Rejoice in the victories. Pray harder when apparent defeats are in the making. Keep your people looking outward instead of inward. It will give their faith a broader base and help keep them from looking only to satisfying their own selfish desires.

World Ministry: The Apple of God's Eye

The best known Scripture verse begins, "For God so loved the world." Whether or not we like it, we are an integral part of a world community. Increasingly there is less emphasis on nations and more interest in regions.

For instance, the Pacific rim upon which Portland sits has become so important economically that we have been forced out of small town Western provincial thinking. In the United States and Canada, as our countries become more and more pluralistic, we must keep ourselves aware of the opportunities as well as challenges that this brings.

Other phenomena that intrigue analysts are the Asianization of the world and the fact that the European community is now an accomplished fact. With the collapse of Communist systems, it has the potential of growing still larger. Such developments must impact our thinking in regard to worldwide evangelism.

At a time when there is a great need for Christians with a world view and a world vision, many churches seem content to send a few dollars to a mission program. Through this, they feel, they have met their responsibilities. But they are missing out on some of the greatest excitement in the Christian world.

Giving to "missions" is important. I feel that one reason God has preserved us as a nation is the faithfulness of American Christians who support overseas work. But there is so much more to do. Once again, there is a need for a coordinated program with someone in charge. Here are some ideas such a person may want to help implement.

We can minister to the world by ministering to foreign students currently in the North America. They will be the future leaders of their countries. Support missionaries who are evangelizing these students. Ask your people to make their homes available for long- or short-term "exchange" students. Ask for homes to serve meals to these people, and include them in family events such as holiday celebrations.

We also minister to the world by keeping informed as to what is going on. Sometimes secular media sources are helpful, but they are incomplete. We need to keep our people constantly updated by securing news of what is happening among and to Christians. With this information, our people can become prayer partners with those who are overseas.

If we are supporting overseas missionaries, it is reasonable that we hold them accountable to our church. Know what they are doing. Be sure they are expending their energies properly. Harass them until they keep you informed through media other than their periodic, innocuous "prayer letter." Video tapes are an excellent way to keep in touch. Some churches call their missionaries long distance and broadcast the whole conversation over the public address system. Sunday morning calls, for instance, are reasonable in cost.

Lavish affection on your missionaries when they are home on furlough. Keep alert to their housing and transportation needs. Aid them in their adjustment to the North American culture. Look after their kids when they have to leave their parents and go back to North America for schooling.

Periodically send some of your leaders to visit them on the field if you can afford it. This is not to be a mere sightseeing trip, however. It is to be an inspection and ministry trip. Let them know you will be taking a good hard look at their ministry. But be prepared to minister to them as well. If your leader has teaching skills work with the missionary in a plan

to use those skills. If manual skills are his forte, ask the missionary to make definite plans so that your leader may use his skills on the mission field. In this way he will become an integral part of the ministry.

Keep your people informed as to the countries in which your missionaries serve. Travelogues and other media sources usually are available. Show these often in church meetings. Plan international "fairs" where people may see pictures, works of art, and taste food from the countries in which your missionaries serve. Perhaps there are shutins or others who will have time to keep up an active correspondence with a missionary. This person can then keep the congregation informed of needs.

Once a year missionary conferences are helpful to draw attention to world ministry. They can be conducted inexpensively if proper planning is done. However, it is not enough to have only one large emphasis on missions each year. The needs of world ministry must be kept before people on a regular basis throughout the year. Only as they develop a world view will they begin to see the need as God sees it.

Identify young people who show signs of being good missionary prospects. Send them on short-term, summer assignments. But before you do so, investigate the sending agency closely. There are some whose philosophies and methods seem questionable.

Challenge your people to short-term missionary opportunities. Missions agencies now have an abundance of these available for people aged eighteen to eighty. Help provide support for these people as you find it possible.

Undoubtedly you have many more good ideas in each of these six areas. Keep those ideas coming, and keep putting "feet" to your ideas. Even though your church is limited in size, you can be part of an exciting church if you are willing to put in the effort to make it exciting.

NOTES

¹ Robert Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), p. 12.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Lawrence Richards and Gib Martin, *A Theology of Personal Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), p. 296.

⁵ Jerry Wofford and Kenneth Kilinski, *Organization and Leadership in the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), p. 134.

⁶ Lloyd Perry, *Getting the Church on Target* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), p. 35.

⁷ Donald L. Bubna, *Building People Through a Caring Sharing Fellowship* (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 1978), p. 000.

BOOK REVIEWS

Joy to the World: Spreading the Good News of the Kingdom

By Robert T. Henderson. Revised edition. Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991. Pp. 208. Paperback \$10.95.

Reading Robert Henderson's revised version of *Joy to the World* was like a visit with an old and good friend. This book, in its first life, was one of my favorite tools in the beginning classes for the Chair of Evangelism and Mission at San Francisco Theological Seminary when that department was new. Then, as now, there is a great need for material in the field that effectively bonds theological and biblical truth to the church's task to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ. Doing this effectively and sensitively, in a world that is preponderantly ignorant of that good news, constitutes the continuing massive challenge which this book describes.

The author has improved this edition in a variety of ways that make it more readable at points, though it is easy reading throughout, and by drawing upon his additional years of pastoral ministry to weave into the book pragmatic insights that will motivate the affirmation of every parish minister who is concerned about evangelism in the local church.

The thrust that Henderson makes is theologically sound. He is concerned that we be about building the kingdom of God. It was Christ's stated agenda. Biblically, this thrust comes through again and again in the New Testament, as well as in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. The book clearly underscores the fact that the people of God are to send signals to the secular culture — "signs" pointing people toward the God of redemptive love and a revolutionary style of life in harmony with the priorities of the Almighty. The first section makes clear that the values and priorities affirmed by Jesus make individual believers and the church in its corporate form to be vital attractive beacons — "signs" that point toward the rule of God in human life. The "kingdom" is thus not an ecclesiastical empire, but rather the governing presence of the risen Savior occupying the inner space of the human heart.

The author, in my judgment, correctly resists succumbing to the temptation to equate the communication of the gospel with every faddish computerized and packaged formula that happens to come down the road. In our obsession with the statistical growth of the churches, we often lock ourselves into a classic American mode. Statistical growth becomes everything and the thoughtful, sensitive shaping and molding of the lives of new disciples gets short shrift.

Henderson urges that we share our own life's journey with those we seek to befriend. We are urged to perceive our ministry as using every effort within the life of the congregation and on the streets of our communities to touch and influence the lives of persons and groups. Such a redemptive message must not overlook the fact that the kingdom of God implies not only the rule of God in the hearts of believers, but the extension of that rule into the systematic structured life of the culture. Such a ministry requires patience, prayer, maturity of faith, sensitivity of heart, coupled with whatever street wise qualities we can acquire. Clearly, there must be both a passionate concern and will to extend the rule of Christ into the systems of life that are designed and governed by people and can be redirected by people, as well. This redirection of lives and of culture becomes the motivation for all who would effectively hear and respond to the oft spoken petition: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Here is a sane, sensitive, meaningful little book that can be useful in seminary classrooms and in lay leadership programs in the local church.

Donald P. Buteyn

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Evangelism in the Reformed Tradition

Edited by Arnold B. Lovell. Decatur, Georgia: Columbia Theological Seminary Press, 1990. Pp. 149. Paperback \$5.00

Evangelism in the Reformed Tradition presents the thinking about evangelism of professors in three Presbyterian (U.S.A.) theological seminaries. It contains nine articles and three sermons which were first presented in late 1989 at a national Symposium on Evangelism sponsored by Columbia, Princeton and Union Theological Seminaries. The symposium and this volume are indicative of the increasingly open and positive attitude on the part of Presbyterians (U.S.A.) toward evangelism.

The term "Reformed Tradition" as used here is quite limited in scope. With a few exceptions these writers do their thinking about evangelism

in isolation from older Reformed positions. They even omit reference to the newer Reformed statements such as those in the recently adopted constitutional documents of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). What we have here is the studied reflection of individual theologians and biblical scholars who see themselves within the Reformed tradition but who do not use that resource in an overt way in their presentations. In addition, it should be noted that these essays seem to be innocent of the larger world conversation now taking place on evangelism in ecumenical and evangelical circles. However, their effort to write on evangelism independently, unencumbered by the thinking of others, may actually be one of the virtues of this volume, since a number of fresh insights emerge.

Four especially provocative articles merit comment. In "The Fields Are White for the Harvest," Diogenes Allen of Princeton Seminary argues that the intellectual climate of Western culture is now changing in the church's favor. He states that we no longer labor within "the tight asphyxiating little world of the Enlightenment." All do not yet clearly see that we are in a new situation because the dust of the collapse of the modern mentality has not yet settled. Those like Allen who do perceive this maintain that the church today is in a dramatically improved situation and that "the fields are white for the harvest."

Walter Brueggemann in "Evangelism in Three Unfinished Scenes" scans scripture and gives seven biblical examples of conflict/victory, announcement, and reception/lived appropriation. These three movements constitute evangelism. In our contemporary situation the announcement is that in Jesus Christ God has overcome the power, threat and attraction of death. Lived appropriation of the news in our context consists of finding ways to disengage our life, our bodies and our imagination from the seemingly all powerful world of consumer economics and military power. For Brueggemann, evangelism is not just about the health of the institutional church, but also about the life of the whole created universe and the fabric of the entire human community.

In "A Reformed Theology of Evangelism," perhaps the high point of the entire volume, Shirley Guthrie of Columbia Seminary sees the problem of evangelism as a lack of understanding of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. He argues that God's grace is both justifying and sanctifying, that it reconciles people both to God and to fellow human beings, and that it is for individual Christians in the church and for the world. Guthrie then discusses God's part and our part in the giving and receiving of God's grace. He exposes positions which make salvation dependent in one way or another upon human action and decision and stresses the Reformation position of salvation by grace alone. For Guthrie the grace of God gives everything persons need for a life of costly and obedient discipleship. It results in evangelism that never becomes discouraged of the power of God to convert individuals, and it overcomes all obstacles to the rule of God in the world.

Richard R. Osmer, then of Union Seminary, Richmond, contributes the article "Evangelism and Education: Developmental Perspectives." He

understands education and evangelism to be distinct and argues against the reduction of education to evangelism or evangelism to education. He states, "Commitment without ongoing deepened understanding can lead to a shallowness of purpose and direction. Learning that is not grounded in personal convictional experience will not issue in transformation of any depth." His contention is illustrated as he examines the role of evangelism and education in three particular phases of the adult life cycle.

These four articles by themselves justify purchasing the book.

Readers from other denominations will not, as indicated, be put off by its being overly Reformed or Presbyterian. Rather, all will find here a number of new conversation partners whose thinking merits being taken seriously in the larger discussions which are now taking place about evangelism in the United States of America.

Evangelism in the Reformed Tradition refers briefly to the church in North America living now in a "missionary context." This all important perspective is not developed adequately and is not even implicitly the basis of the thinking in any but two of the articles. Perhaps the numerical decline and marginalization of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) over the last thirty years is a well known fact. However, to this reviewer, the editor would have done well to include at least a few introductory paragraphs about this reality. That, after all, is the institutional situation which gave rise to the symposium and this book.

The presidents of the three seminaries state in their introduction that one of their desires is to "legitimate evangelism." The symposium and this volume do just that. The affirmation of evangelism by this stellar line-up of church leaders is bound to encourage the generality of thoughtful ministers and members to take the work of evangelism more seriously. Whether this academic stimulus to think more positively and theologically about evangelism will topple over into evangelistic practice in and among the Presbyterian family in the United States remains to be seen.

John R. Hendrick

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

Reinventing Evangelism: New Strategies for Presenting Christ in Today's World

By Donald C. Posterski. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989.
Pp. 202. Paperback \$9.95.

This book is representative of a growing number of works which are calling the church to respond to the changing cultural context in North America. The thesis is that the church's influence within society has become uncentered, and Christians are having to learn a new language

and set of skills if they hope to be effective in reaching others for Christ.

The author draws extensively on his years of experience as an InterVarsity staff member who worked with college students in Canadian Universities. Numerous examples of practical stories make his popularized analysis of the dramatic cultural shift to a pluralistic and secular society come alive with insight. The challenge is for Christians to retool their understanding of their own faith in light of this change, before they attempt to relate the gospel to their context. The strength of the book lies in its easy-to-read format and easy-to-comprehend analysis. The sections dealing with becoming meaning makers, overcoming intimidation, engaging pluralism, and decoding cultural Christianity were particular helpful in moving the Christian out of his/her church familiarity into the dramatically changed cultural landscape. Woven throughout the entire book is a strong emphasis on the necessity of building and nurturing meaningful relationships with those persons whom we hope to impact with the gospel.

The audiences for which this book is geared include the local church leader, college student, or seminary student who are looking for an introductory work on the shape personal evangelism will take in the 1990s. I have found it to be one of the more appreciated works assigned in the evangelism course taught at our seminary. The common comment made is that this particular book strikes a responsive note of reality with them about the way things are out there, and the way we need to approach people in light of these realities. The weakness of the book lies in its tendency to individualize the evangelism task in the face of the growing reality of cultural fragmentation and pluralism. Converting people individually without also converting them to Christian community will only compound the fragmentation in the lives of many. Although the author's suggested strategies for retooling one's personal evangelism are excellent, they will most likely require the context of a vibrant local community of believers to be effective in converting people to both Christ and his body. The book fails to address this issue.

Overall this book is a helpful addition to the general evangelism literature which notes that there is a new landscape out there, and that the forms and words of yesteryear are simply no longer meaningful to the unchurched. While its cultural analysis is less than adequate for a missiological theory, its applied emphasis and story telling format make it easy to understand and enjoyable to read.

Craig Van Gelder

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Evangelization from a Liberation Perspective

By Priscilla Pope-Levison. New York: Peter Lang, 1991. Pp. 201. \$35.95.

It has been clear for some time that the ministry of evangelism is best served theologically by those who write from an evangelical or a liberation perspective. Other theologies may serve the church by honing issues of faith and practice; but evangelism, while no less in need of such direction, also needs theological affirmation that the good news of Jesus Christ is newsworthy, and above all efficacious. Evangelical theologies provide that assurance by affirming the power of the gospel for gracious renewal in the lives of persons. Liberation theologies provide the same assurance by uncovering the power of the gospel for social and systemic renewal. And both theologies at their best are centered on Jesus of Nazareth and his teachings.

Here we have an excellent introduction to some of the major Latin American liberation theologians, written from the perspective of a North American evangelical. It provides us with a fine example of the present cutting edge of evangelistic studies. Our appetite was whetted by Priscilla Pope-Levison's tribute to Orlando Costas in the *Journal of the AETE* (Volume 4 [1988-89], pp. 4-15), and there is more of the same throughout this volume, as she guides us through an extensive selection of writings. There are two sections: Roman Catholic writers (Leonardo Boff, Segundo Galilea, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Oscar Romero, Juan Luis Segundo, Jon Sobrino); and Protestant writers: (Mortimer Arias, Emilio Castro, Orlando Costas, José Míguez Bonino). The treatment of each theologian is succinct and the documentation is detailed—a good format for classroom use—and the chapters conclude with an assessment of the contribution each has made to the field. In addition, we are given an informed assessment of Roman Catholic and ecumenical documents on evangelization in recent decades. The chapter on the World Council of Churches is particularly insightful.

From all of this data, Pope-Levison formulates an agenda for evangelistic studies that merits serious consideration. There is first of all the issue of collegiality: "The similarities in [these] writings on evangelization are due, among other reasons, to the influence of these theologians on each other . . . [They] are familiar with and interact with each other's writings" (p. 155). Would that this were so in North America! Then there are the emphases of evangelism from a liberation perspective: the reign of God, annunciation *and* denunciation, personal *and* collective conversion, contextualization, preference for the poor, and a wholistic approach that avoids opposites and dichotomies. In short, "Jesus is the model evangelizer who is to be imitated" (p. 159). And lastly, in keeping with her thesis that evangelization can link theological reflection and praxis, she proposes a four-fold model: 1. Consider the context from the perspective of the marginalized; 2. Compare the findings from step one with the vision of God's reign; 3. Choose the means of evangelization most likely to change the context; 4. Convoke a concerted community effort for evangelization.

If there is a criticism, it is the tendency of Pope-Levison to evaluate these theologians by the extent to which they have addressed the subject of

evangelization, rather than by the significance for evangelization of their writings as a whole. This does not always meet her stated criterion of letting the authors speak for themselves, a notable example being Juan Luis Segundo, who is given somewhat short shrift.

This does not detract, however, from the signal contribution of this volume to the field. It establishes the author as a significant new colleague, and sets some important compass headings for class-room and congregation alike.

David Lowes Watson

David Lowes Watson is Executive Secretary for Christian Formation at the General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, and editor of the *Journal of the AETE*.

Church Planting for a Greater Harvest: A Comprehensive Guide

By C. Peter Wagner. Ventura, CA.: Regal Books, 1990.
Pp. 156. Paperback \$8.95.

The central thesis of this book can best be summarized in the words of Wagner (page 11), "The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches." Wagner predicates this thesis on the substantial research done concerning new church development in the past two or three decades. In typical Wagner style, he writes in a readable, didactic, "user-friendly" way that will be appreciated by a wide audience, including denominational leaders, local church leaders and evangelism professors.

Wagner states his three-fold purpose in the Introduction: (1) to motivate church leaders concerning church planting, (2) to present a variety of models of new church development, in order to begin many new churches, and (3) to provide a compendium of "tools necessary." In fulfilling these purposes, Wagner calls upon the materials he has presented in the Charles E. Fuller Institute Evangelism and Church Growth Seminar entitled "How to Plant a Church" and in class presentation notes delivered to students at Fuller Theological Seminary. He writes from an independent, charismatic, evangelical perspective, and makes numerous critiques and helpful suggestions of how mainline denominations could implement these insights on new church development.

In his chapter on "Removing the Barriers," Wagner presents an apologetic for new church development. While dealing with the pragmatic objections to new church developments, Wagner directs the discussion back to the essential question of theology, which is grounded in the exegetical underpinnings of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). As usual, his theological assumptions are tersely stated and rarely developed.

In dealing with "the essentials for planting" (Chapter 3), Wagner lifts up the often overlooked need for strategic and concentrated prayer on behalf of the new church development pastor and emerging congregation (pages 41-51). Most would agree with Wagner that the single most important aspect of starting a new church is choosing the right organizing pastor for the new church development. Many will find useful his list of the characteristics of "an ideal planter."

Various models of new church development are explored in his chapter on "Twelve good ways to plant a church." Many of his suggestions are inappropriate for mainline denominations. However, his chapter unveils a long-overdue discussion on moving away from a single or dual model to a sense of the multiplicity of ways that the Holy Spirit has moved in beginning new churches.

Wagner makes a most useful distinction in presenting the need for intentionality concerning church membership size based on the unchurched demography. Once the entity or governing body determines the potential size of the new church, then a decision can be made as to whether this is an intentionally smaller (under 200 members) or an intentionally larger new church development (200 members on up into the thousands). Most of his book relates to larger membership new church developments (NCDs). Indeed, his major case studies reflect the calling of a gifted, highly skilled, organizing/founding pastor that exudes charisma. His statements on when and how to buy the NCD church site are predicated on the premise that all intentionally larger membership NCDs will be able to purchase their own property, as well as build their first and succeeding buildings. Many denominations have not found this to be a feasible plan, particularly where expensive real estate is characteristic of the region in which the new church is located.

Wagner's broad overview of the subject does provide an invaluable explanation of insights for larger membership new church developments, namely, NCD site location, demographics, developing a nucleus, beginning the first worship service with a large number of people, breaking the 200 barrier, staffing for future growth, and reaching a target audience. I regret that he does not deal with multi-cultural and racial ethnic new church developments in any degree of depth.

Finally, he provides one of the best and up-to-date bibliographies on new church development, as well as a brief annotated list of "Resources for Church Planters." Even though many of us have to translate or change some of Wagner's suggestions in light of our denominational contexts, his book on new church development is a timely and helpful overview.

H. Stanley Wood

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God Does Not Foreclose: The Universal Promise of Salvation.

By David Lowes Watson. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.
Pp. 160. \$12.95.

This book teaches well! Students in my introductory course found that it integrated historical, systematic and practical issues in an exciting way. The whole book exudes "good news" as its theme, from its celebration of the "wideness of God's mercy" to the vibrant call to costly discipleship. And in every chapter wisdom and wit enliven the reading.

It is really a *theological* book. Watson speaks of his task as "clearing a blockage . . . the misappropriation of God's grace as a particular benefit of Christians rather than a universal gift to be shared with the world" (p.9). And clear it he does, but he does it *positively* by articulating a powerful vision of evangelism based on universal *hope*.

He is clear that "we can in no way predetermine the final outcome of Christ's saving work" but "we can surely hope that God will manage to bring together the human family in its entirety to celebrate the heavenly feast" (p. 14). What drives his vision of evangelism throughout the book is this hope rather than fear of losing souls to perdition! How refreshing.

The fullness and finality of God's revelation in Christ are central; and the demands of the gospel are as firmly presented as its gifts; grace and judgment are united. Judgment is not merely for those "outside the gates," but *most particularly* for "those who know God and refuse to obey God's law" (p. 91). Therefore the Christian goes on, "not only from grace to grace, but from repentance to repentance."

This book was excellent for use with seminarians. It is also promising for use in pastor's discussion groups. But let lay folk get their hands on it and I think they will shout for joy. Here is a look which makes theological sense, reads well, and presents a challenge to a disciplined life of grace. The most telling remark I have heard about it came from one of my students, and her testimony was echoed by the whole class: "It had enabled me to share my faith with others without being embarrassed."

M.B. Handspicker

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Welcome! A Biblical and Practical Guide to Receiving New Members.

By Ervin R. Stutzman. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1990.
Pp. 174. Paperback \$8.95.

One of the ever present realities within the church is the call to welcome new persons into the community of faith. From his experience in church planting and evangelism at both the denominational and congregational level, Ervin R. Stutzman herein offers a basic overview of the possibilities and pitfalls inherent within our attempts to offer hospitality to the stranger. Though written by a Mennonite, this book has wide practical relevance for seminary teaching since it deals with the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion which can be present in any congregation.

The author's concern for congruence between theology and the practice of ministry is seen in the initial chapter.

The church sign announced in bold letters: WELCOME TO ALL. For most of the members of the church, the sign probably meant little. But for the new attender, the message was crucial. After all, businesses are expected to honor the message on their advertising signs and bulletin boards. Should we expect less of the church?

The subsequent chapters of the book provide a descriptive and prescriptive framework for addressing the local congregation's "welcoming quotient" grounded in the five basic assumptions which underlie his work. Stutzman asserts that (1) every church should be a receptive fellowship; (2) most churches can improve their ability to receive people; (3) receiving people isn't easy; (4) the responsibility for incorporating new people lies with the church, and largely with the leadership; and, (5) the process of receiving new people will affect almost every aspect of church life (pp. 39-40).

Stutzman's anecdotal style is clear and to the point, as captured in his analogy of the non-welcoming church to the motel with a "No Vacancy" sign. With humor and grace, this work offers helpful insights into the nuts and bolts of welcoming persons, from signage and parking to the amount and style of music in the worship service. Though it may appear somewhat trivial, this information is instructive to pastor and layperson alike.

The significance of *Welcome!* for the theory and practice of evangelism is found in its style, structure, and approach. Stutzman presents us with a book which is easy to read and use, for its thirteen chapters make it readily accessible as a quarterly study. While written in a popular tone, the book still confronts crucial issues necessary for church transformation, such as the conflicting congregational traditions found in the "homesteaders" and the "pioneers" (pp. 142ff.). Each chapter includes a series of questions

for further reflection, study, and action which are appropriate for personal use or in group process in the life of the local congregation.

As a reviewer, I appreciate Stutzman's connection of the welcoming and incorporating task of the church with our tendency to slight and ignore those who are "foreign," "alien," or "stranger." While I might differ at some points with the choice of pericopes or exegetical work found in the text, or certain theological nuances of the author's arguments, to challenge those at this juncture would be to deny the essence of the message of the text being reviewed. To adequately review the book on its own terms demands accepting it even if "alien" to my theological tradition, rather than to exclude the "newcomer" because it may not be "Presbyterian."

I welcome this book as an addition to the literature available for hands-on use with congregations for local church planning and study, with the recommendation that it be used with companion pieces from other denominational or theological perspectives in order to present the diversity of the "strangers" we may encounter in ministry.

Arnold B. Lovell

Arnold B. Lovell is Visiting Professor of Evangelism at Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia.

BOOK NOTES

by

George R. Hunsberger

Truth to Tell: The Gospel As Public Truth

By Lesslie Newbigin. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991. Pp. 74. Paperback \$6.95.

This short volume has the potential to make Newbigin's recent challenge to the churches within Western culture more accessible to a wider audience. Following in the vein of *Foolishness To the Greeks* (1986) and *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (1989), the three chapters are substantially the lectures given in the fall of 1990 at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. In them, Newbigin searches for ways for the church to live and testify beyond the relegation to the private realm of personal opinion to which our pluralist culture has assigned us. He provides help for how we can know the gospel as truth, how we can believe it as a church, and how we can represent it in public.

The Church Growth Handbook

By William M. Easum. Foreword by Joe Harding. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990. Pp. 176. \$14.95.

The book is intended to provide practical methods to help a congregation identify its strengths and weaknesses and develop strategies to overcome their weaknesses and further develop their strengths. Six chapters lay the groundwork for the use of Easum's Ministry Audit provided in Chapter 7. The preparatory chapters describe twenty "church growth principles" drawn from the experience of the church Easum pastors in San Antonio and the audit consists of a tool to help churches look at each of them and assess and interpret the implications for their own situations.

The twenty "church growth principles" upon which the handbook is based would likely be affirmed generally by leaders in the field as representative of the conventional wisdom. The book illustrates, however, how

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Antonio and the audit consists of a tool to help churches look at each of them and assess and interpret the implications for their own situations.

The twenty "church growth principles" upon which the handbook is based would likely be affirmed generally by leaders in the field as representative of the conventional wisdom. The book illustrates, however, how "church growth" strategies have increasingly substituted membership recruitment for evangelism most wholly understood. Easum's Principle Fifteen, in a backhanded way, points toward evangelism by affirming that "growth can happen without merely transferring members from one church to another," i.e. by profession of faith and/or restoration. That slightly direct reference to the evangelistic vision, usually used to affirm that church growth is biblical, begs for more focused attention.

Turning To God: Biblical Conversion in the Modern World

By David F. Wells. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989. Pp. 160. Paperback \$9.95.

David Wells serves as collator, interpreter and theologian in his own right in this broad-ranging biblical and theological survey of the notion of conversion to Christian faith. Basing his study on papers presented at a consultation on the theme co-sponsored by the World Evangelical Fellowship and the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (Hong Kong, January, 1988), Wells brings into dialogue contemporary issues and experiences from contexts around the world on the one hand and biblical perspectives on the other. In this respect, both in format and style this study follows the pattern of his earlier volume which served a similar purpose for the Oslo Consultation of WEF and LCWE (1985) on the work of the Holy Spirit, a precursor to Hong Kong (*God the Evangelist: How the Holy Spirit Works to Bring Men and Women to Faith*, Eerdmans, 1987).

Wells' survey of conversion develops its implications for "insiders" who "already understand and believe a substantial amount of what the Bible teaches when they hear the gospel" (49) and "religious outsiders" for whom that is not the case. Under the latter rubric, particular attention is given to the conversion of Jews and Muslims (although Wells leaves it more ambiguous whether the Jews should be classified as "outsiders"), of Hindus and Buddhists, and of "materialist outsiders." In the last category, Wells helpfully shows that both Marxist materialism and Western secularism share an "outsider" orientation (if that, in fact, is the most helpful way to set the spectrum in the first place). Here, even more than elsewhere, Wells shows that while he is essentially arguing the case for the view of conversion which has been most distinctively held within evangelicalism, he is sensitive to the need for a constant willingness to have traditional understandings reviewed and critiqued by the biblical portrait of the nature of "turning to God." The book ends on the note of a critical challenge to the churches of Western societies to examine how fully their notions of the gospel and conversion to it have become gripped in a cultural accommodation.

Why I Believe In A Personal God: The Credibility of Faith In A Doubting Culture

By George Carey. Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1991 (British copyright, 1989). Pp. 145. Paperback \$8.95.

This testament by the new Archbishop of Canterbury of the Church of England attempts to provide a fresh apologetic for Christian faith which takes seriously the particular forms of modern secularity now shaping people's attitudes. He presents an "argument" for belief in the personal God whose self expression has been most meaningfully made in Jesus Christ. While that argument rests on many "rational" foundations, it takes fully into account the fact that doubt, skepticism and unbelief among moderns is generally more a matter of the absorption of an attitude than it is of rational debate. He recognizes that the issue lies deeper than the mere acknowledgment that God exists. It is a question of the perceived and felt relevance of that God to the way life plays itself out. He demonstrates how the most serious effect of Western culture upon our thinking has been to strip away the transcendent, the mystery, the awe, the supernatural. Carey addresses his testament to the recipients of the culture's doubt for whom there is no sense that God is needed.

This intellectually astute—but warm and personal—conversation about faith and doubt invites modern people back into the questions of meaning, hope, and values and models a personal struggle to believe alongside a conviction that belief is reasonable and practicable. While written from within the British experience of Western culture, its eye on the North American context places the book into a broader relevance. The book helps open windows on the fresh new apologetic challenges with which evangelism must deal within every Western society.

How Does America Hear the Gospel?

By William A. Dyrness. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989. Pp. 164. \$11.95.

By pressing the question in the title of his book, Dyrness breaks open a way of addressing the issue which is increasingly essential for the American (USA) churches: in the encounter of the gospel with our own culture, how do we discern what has been the gospel's imprint on our culture and what has been the culture's way of shaping our gospel? He asks the question with a clear sense that an astute cultural anthropological analysis is crucial if we are to develop appropriateness, relevance and faithfulness in our presentation of the gospel to America.

Dyrness's approach is largely historical, keying on the origins of contemporary culture in the religious heritage of the earliest European settlers, particularly the Puritans. He shows how early images of the "Virgin Land," forms of the "American Dream," and vision of the "American

Adam" gave rise to the pragmatism, optimism and individualism which have become characteristic of American culture. The challenge of proclaiming a "contextualized gospel," illustrated for the most part by the practices of Walter Rauschenbusch (of the last century) and Robert Schuller, is presented against a sense that for America the loss of the religious heart of our values has brought us to the experience of a Virgin Land which is "not pure," the pursuit of a dream which "does not belong to us," and the awareness that the American Adam "has fallen."

For Dyrness, the key to a contextualized message is to show the gospel as that which restores the heart of American values and supplies what has come to be lacking in the contemporary experience of our culture's key values. The approach runs along the lines of the "synthesis" model of H. Richard Niebuhr's "Christ and Culture" typology in which the gospel is seen as that which completes and fulfills the values and institutions of a society. Ways in which the original Puritan faith which Dyrness describes was also a contextualized faith are never considered, and a direct rationale for the essentially synthetic approach to culture operating in his treatment (and the underlying anthropological and theological assumptions that implies!) is not adequately provided. But the challenge of engaging what a "contextualization" of the gospel within the culture of America must mean is forcefully put by Dyrness's fascinating and informative account.

THE ACADEMY FOR EVANGELISM IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Eighteenth Annual Meeting

MINUTES

The eighteenth annual meeting of the Academy For Evangelism in Theological Education was held on the campus of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 4-6, 1990. The meeting was opened at 7:30 p.m. by President Richard Stoll Armstrong. The members of the Academy introduced themselves. Dr. Don H. Stewart, Vice President of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary greeted us. He introduced Dr. W. Edward Thiele and Dr. Charles E. Harvey who were assisting in hosting the meeting. Dr. Stewart spoke of the French, Spanish, and Vietnamese populations in New Orleans and the evangelistic opportunities in the city. Richard V. Peace, of Gordon Conwell Seminary, lead devotions—a biblical devotional on the conversion of Paul. His eventual goal in the following devotionals would be to examine the conversion of the Twelve. Their conversions were more of a process and are legitimate models for us. Dick Armstrong led us in prayer.

William E. Pannell, of Fuller Seminary, gave the keynote address on "Evangelism and the African American." He pointed out that Blacks have uniformly had experiences of oppression or embarrassment, so when they come to the text of Scripture, they see oppression and/or deliverance there. Black institutions do not seem to stress evangelism or speak certain evangelistic words, but evangelism is inherent, especially if the proclamation of the Good News is understood as release from oppression. James Capers, Director of Evangelism-Outreach for the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and James Stallings, Director of Preaching Resources, Evangelism Ministries, American Baptist Church, participated in a helpful discussion of the issues raised by Pannell. Ray Bakke closed the Thursday night session with prayer.

On Friday morning, Dick Peace opened with devotions at 9:00 a.m. He pursued his theme of examining the conversion of the twelve, drawing on the Gospel of Mark. Then he led in prayer.

H. Stanley Wood, Associate for Church Growth and New Church Development, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) gave a presentation, "Equipping Denominations for Evangelism and New Church Development." His approach drew heavily on demographic studies.

After coffee break, Robert Anderson read Milton Rudnick's paper, "Critical Gospel Issues Confronting Us." Due to airline problems, Dr. Rudnick was not able to attend. David Hester and Jerry Reed both responded to the Rudnick paper.

We left by bus for a tour of the city. Dr. Tom Roote was guide. We visited four urban mission projects that are making significant impact in New Orleans. At the first project we had a lunch that is part of the regular feeding program of the host mission. The four pastors of the four projects visited each explained his church's ministry to us. The pastors and churches were: Rev. David Shelton, New Orleans Revival Center; Rev. Sam Hamilton, Central Baptist Church; Rev. Paul Morton, Greater St. Stephen's Baptist Church; and Rev. Charles Green, World of Faith Church. We returned to the seminary campus about 5:00 p.m.

At 6:00 p.m. we enjoyed a meal hosted by Dr. Landrum P. Leavell, President of the host school. Dr. Leavell spoke words of greeting to us. Dr. William F. Warren, Jr. spoke on "Evangelism in the Context of Liberation Theology: Structural Sin and Structural Conversion." He explained that liberation theology is especially concerned to convert or change the evil structures of society. Warren observed that personal conversion must bring concern to follow the will of God, that people are saved to live in society, and that if we convert structures and not people, the sinful people will ruin the structures again.

At 8:00 p.m., we went to the recital hall to hear Corean Bakke give a warm and moving piano concert and lecture. The concert included music of both little known and well known composers, secular and gospel, with some special emphasis on music by Black composers.

The Saturday morning session was opened at 9:00 a.m. with prayer and devotions by Richard Peace. The contrasting of the conversion of Paul and the Twelve led Dick to conclusions for the church today.

Dick Peace then presented the syllabus project, and the collection of syllabi were made available for \$5 each to AETE members. A motion was made to express thanks to Dick Peace, Ken Parker, James Singleton, Tom McAlpine, and MARC for their production of the syllabus project.

Dick Armstrong led our business meeting. The minutes of last year as published in the Journal were approved.

Ron Crandall presented the Treasurer's report. It was received with appreciation.

Jerry Reed was nominated for secretary for a one year term and was elected. Appreciation was expressed to Chic Shaver for his service as secretary for the last two years. It was suggested that President Armstrong

send a letter of commendation to Chic Shaver's president.

Chic Shaver recommended the following for membership: For full membership: Willard Hartstine and Floyd Babcock (by previous executive committee action), H. Stanley Wood, Chek Yat Phoon, Tim Beougher, Gordon Turner, Patricia Brown, Kent Hunter, Lloyd Grant McClung, Jr., David Schotchmer, Phil Roberts; for Associate membership: Roy Wesley Stepp, Donald C. Bommarito, Randy Jordan. James Ponder's status as a full member was affirmed.

Dick Armstrong announced the 1991 meeting, October 10-12 at Fresno, Mennonite Biblical Seminary. In October 8-10, 1992, we will meet in Toronto with Gordon Turner as host.

George Hunsberger announced the coming lecture of Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, October 30-31, 1990, and raised the issues of "The Gospel and Our Culture." He invited our contributions to the network dealing with these issues.

David Watson reported on the *Journal*. We expressed our special thanks to Marigene Chamberlain for her work for the AETE. David Watson called attention to:

1. The four year index published with this last *Journal*.
2. The need for AETE members to submit their articles to the *Journal*.
3. The fact we have an editorial committee.
4. The upcoming appointment of a book review editor.
5. The need to boost the *Journal*.

Marigene Chamberlain reported that we send out 350 Journals (124 to Academy members). This includes 117 libraries and 50 institutions.

The *Journal* report was received.

Pete Hendrick suggested that the 1993 *Journal* and Academy highlight the World Congress of Religions. Several suggestions were made about improving *Journal* circulation.

Dick Armstrong reported the executive committee is urging a registration fee for attendance at meetings. The suggestion is \$25. Discussion ensued. A substitute motion was made to allow the executive committee to set the fee annually and the minimum be \$25 for each meeting. The substitute motion passed.

Dick Armstrong suggested possible Black and White speakers from South Africa for the 1991 meeting. A program committee includes host school person, Dick Armstrong, and another person. Volunteers were called for.

The meeting was opened for ideas for the future.

1. Bob Anderson suggested a theme "Women in Evangelism."
2. TV. Thomas suggested some teachers teaching courses dealing with issues pertaining to evangelism but not entitled evangelism might be encouraged to attend.
3. TV. Thomas asked for more time to dialogue and process issues raised.
4. Arnold Lovell suggested a longer meeting and that devotions be in continuity.
5. There needs to be time for discussion among members. Interaction is major need (Jerry Handspicker).
6. There were major thematic shifts in this meeting (George Hunsberger).

David Watson moved that President Armstrong write members that we consider extending the meeting through Sunday morning and discuss this issue next year.

Pete Hendrick made a substitute motion that next year's program go through Saturday evening. This was passed.

Watson urged that we have book reviews presented next time. Dick Armstrong presented Ray Bakke's letter on an urban evangelism class for students. It was suggested individual seminaries contact Ray if interested.

Bob Anderson dismissed us with prayer at 11:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Chic Shaver
Secretary

The Twentieth Annual Meeting

PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT

The Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Academy will be held at Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, on October 8-11, 1992. Host member will be Francis E. Ringer.