JOURNAL OF THE ACADEMY FOR EVANGELISM IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Volume Five
1989-1990

The Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education

Executive Committee

The Journal of the Academy for Evangelism

Editor: **David Lowes Watson**

Circulation Editor: **Marigene Chamberlain**
P.O. Box 840,
Nashville, TN 37202-0840.
Tel: 615-340-7010.

The Journal (ISSN 0894-9034) is published annually, and is supplied free of charge to members of the Academy. Copies may be purchased at a cost of $10.00 per single issue, or $30.00 per subscription for four issues, and ordered from the Circulation Editor.

JOURNAL OF THE ACADEMY FOR EVANGELISM IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Volume Five 1989-90

CASE STUDIES

BOOK NOTES

SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ACADEMY

Editorial Introduction

The primary focus of this volume is Black Evangelism, a theme chosen by the Academy's Executive Committee with quite deliberate wording. The intent is to address more than the practice of evangelism in the Black church or the evangelistic methods to be employed in reaching Black people. The purpose rather is a two-fold discussion of the African American heritage and its evangelistic implications: how this particular history (still with us) must be viewed in light of the gospel; and how White evangelism must be evaluated in light of what is revealed by such an examination. Bill Pannell, a past president of the Academy, has served as associate editor in this task, and the title of the article he himself has contributed puts the critical question very directly: "Incongruity and Integrity." This, and the contributions from Enoch Oglesby and James Capers, confront us with the very essence of the evangelistic task: to ensure that the good news of the gospel is first and foremost good news for the poor and the oppressed—as Jesus made quite incontrovertible in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:18-19).

By no means unrelated to this theme is the question of pluralism, and how the evangelist can maintain both the integrity and the relevance of the Christian message in the midst of cultural and religious diversity. Ted Peters articulates the theological questions; Chek Yat Phoon gives a contextual example of the task; and in the report by Norman Thomas of the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism at San Antonio in May, 1989, the same issues emerge with cogency. (A report of Lausanne II, scheduled for this issue, was unavoidably delayed and will appear instead in the next volume.)

Turning to the academic context of evangelism, Billy Abraham provides an assessment of the field from the perspective of a major school of theology. His paper occasioned lively discussion at last year's meeting in Minnesota, and the questions he raises merit continued consideration. The two case studies by Harry Poe and William Groover are important additions to the resources regularly offered in this section of the *Journal.*

Readers who are interested in our authors will have noted that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is well represented in this volume. The evangelistic work being done by this denomination is theologically stimulating and ecclesially vigorous, and their annual *Academy for Evangelists,* now in its fourth year, has become a major event in the field. Those interested in further information can contact Dr. Wayne Stumme, Director, Institute for Mission in the U.S.A., Trinity Lutheran Seminary, 2199 East Main Street, Columbus, Ohio 43209.

David Lowes Watson

THE ETHICS OF *COMMUNITAS:* TOWARD A SOCIAL EVANGELISM IN THE BLACK CHURCH

Enoch H. Oglesby

Introduction

In this paper I wish to focus attention on the politics of evangelism in the Black church from the vantage of the ethics of *communitas*. Our task in a formal sense involves a common search for viable ethico-theological norms for interpreting and analyzing the complex phenomenon of evangelism in the life and practice of the Black church. One of the assumptions that I bring to this task is the view that the church in a post-industrial society can be neither institutionally viable nor prophetic in terms of its messianic mission apart from seeing evangelism as a function of both social justice and *communitas*. To state the matter as simply and boldly as possible, the imminent challenge before the church today is to see evangelism, however defined in the congregation or the seminary, as a function of God's passion for justice and *communitas*.

Presumably, this will not outrage the sensibilities of most decent people. Traditionally, I submit that we have not been accustomed to thinking in this vein. Indeed, the Christian community has often, in varying degrees, perceived the issue of social justice as a reality separate from the practice of evangelism. The former is perceived by many lay persons as the primary concern of social ethics; while the latter is understood by some as the primary focus of Christian education. Frederick S. Carney, in his article "Living the Truth in Love," suggests to us that this rather strange perception is more symmetrical than asymmetrical in character, as one evaluates what type of ethical theories — deontological or teleological — can best assist and enable the Christian community to rightly assess its own motives and actions relative to evangelism.[1]

Theologically discerned, the notion of evangelism has been interpreted in a variety of ways in the Christian community. The notion itself means many things to many people. For some it conjures up the image of the "street corner" preacher who roams about the landscape of the city or

---

Enoch H. Oglesby is Professor of Theology and Social Ethics at Eden Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

countryside proclaiming one simple message: "Jesus Saves! Give your heart, soul, and mind to the Lord Jesus!" For others the idea of evangelism symbolizes a sort of "door-to-door" canvassing in the neighborhood, where the word of the living God is literally "brought home" to strangers by friends of a local congregation. Here the main goal is church growth. Still others tend to think of evangelism along the lines of the universalization of the gospel for the whole of humanity. Here the Billy Grahams and Tom Skinners are archetypal symbols.

Now from the vantage point of ethical analysis, the notion of evangelism is derived from the Latin word *evangelium,* which connotes "good tidings," and from the Greek "eu" which means "well" or to hear a message. Both words combine and come together to symbolize the proclamation of good tidings. Hence, the evangelist is one who is authorized to proclaim good news.

In the New Testament, the high concentration of what has been technically known as *kerygma* often set the stage for what the evangel should be about. Ethically, the *kerussein* root ("to proclaim") is by no means solitary. The act of proclaiming the Christian message is also reflected in a correlative word in the Greek, *marturein*, which means to "bear witness." For the people of God "to bear witness," *marturein*, means to announce God's kingdom; the reign of God in and over human affairs. It is nothing less than the dawn of a new age, the joyful announcement of the new humanity revealed in Jesus Christ. The ethics of *communitas*, I wish to argue, is in one sense the historical arena by which we express our concern for relationship-building as the church participates in the dawn of a new age. The church bears witness to the gospel. The gospel is good news. It is proclamation.

Specifically, I wish to focus attention around the following concerns: (a) a brief overview of selected works in the field of Black Christian social ethics in order to provide a few clues as to what normative principles might be useful in understanding the dynamics of evangelism in the Black church; (b) an exploration of social evangelism as good news to the poor; (c) a concern for a creative pattern of movement from the classical preoccupation on part of many with a love ethic to a justice ethic or from what I call "love-talk" to "justice-walk;" and (d) a constructive statement on the nature and task of ethics of *communitas* in light of the importance of social evangelism in the Black church.

I. Black Christian Social Ethics: An Overview

In discussing the idea of evangelism from the perspective of Black Christian social ethics, we are not likely to find a consensus among scholars and religionists on what norms seem appropriate for moral discourse and critical reflection. There are likely to be as many diverging vantage points as there are theological methods. From the outset one must acknowledge that there is a perplexing scarcity of information, systemic treatment and theological analysis of the relation of ethics and evangelism in the Black religious experience. To my knowledge very

little has been done to bring these two dynamic fields of study together by Black theologians and social ethicists. For example, James Cone, in his book *God of the Oppressed,* tends to treat moral issues and ethics in general as a "natural child of theology."[2] In one sense, this mode of reflection seems to muddy the water as to the constructive-critical task of ethics in relation to evangelism. Though Christian theology and ethics can never be separated, they do need to be held in tension, since each claims different points of departure and different methods of analysis, though the ultimate end for the people of God may be liberation in human *communitas.* The volume *Roots of a Black Future* by J. Deotis Roberts makes some important connections between the family and the church in light of the Christian gospel of hope and liberation.[3] But here again the author is primarily concerned with the ground work for a theological understanding of the church through the image of the family as model. It does not make a historical connection between ethics and evangelism *per se,* in the long struggle by Blacks to achieve full freedom, equality and equal justice in the American socio-cultural system. I am suggesting that the problem is complicated not only because of the interdisciplinary character of Black Christian social ethics and what ethicists and theologians do when engaged in the constructive task, but also because each tends to have a different set of presuppositions and interests that they bring to the subject matter of Black experience in White America. Thus the search for useful norms to engage evangelism in the Black church is made more difficult.

On the contemporary American scene a number of Black social ethicists have written books and essays that give us some clues in our search for viable norms for evangelism in the Black community. This cadre of Black scholarship includes such thinkers as C. Eric Lincoln, J. Washington, Preston Williams, M. Jones, and George D. Kelsey—to name a few. Perhaps a fresh look is needed today at Kelsey's perceptive work, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man,*[4] which first appeared in the mid-sixties. We recall his historical analysis and penetrating critique of the phenomenon of racism in the American socio-cultural system. The upshot of Kelsey's thesis is that Christian faith and the "good news" of Jesus Christ is not only compromised but perverted by the reality of systemic racism. For Kelsey, the problem of Christian faith in mainline White Protestant churches is peculiarly complicated because racism as a phenomenon sets itself up as an alternative faith system, with a central commitment to the idol god of race.[5] Thus he criticizes racism as an idolatrous religion. Given the wide variety of "new racism" sweeping the country now, it may be well to go back and re-examine Kelsey's basis thesis.

Of further interest in our overview and analysis is the article, "The Problem of a Black Ethic," by Preston Williams.[6] Here the central focus is on the *prima facie* norms which affect the tempo of Black life and the way Blacks struggle to make sense out of the Christian faith in the American context. The Black experience in America is interpreted by Williams in terms of three essential norms for liberation for both Black and White Communities: promise-keeping, reparation, and moral responsibility.

They may give us some clues, I think, in regard to an ethical basis for social evangelism in the Black church. They may also provide Black and White Christian communities with a means for working through conflict to cooperation and attitudinal change in the long struggle for authentic freedom and racial justice in America.

Another important work in the field of Black Christian social ethics is a book by Ervin Smith entitled, *The Ethics of Martin Luther King, Jr.*[7] This particular volume joins the growing number of significant contributions being made to a communitarian understanding of King's theology and ethics and its import for social evangelism in the life and witness of the Black church. Descriptively and analytically, the volume is divided into seven chapters, ranging from the philosophical and religio-cultural foundations of King's ethical thought to the promise of his eschatological vision for the whole church in the closing decades of the century. Moral perspectives on such provocative controversial issues as violence and nonviolence, war and peace, economic injustice, racial oppression, and patterns of marriage and family life, are objects of careful systemic analysis by the author.

It seems to me that Smith's work is significant in our search for viable norms of evangelism in the Black church for at least three reasons. In the first place, he spares no pain in laying out the *ethical context* for interpreting the complex social issues raised by the problem of evangelism in the life and faith of the Black church today. Consistent with King's ethico-theological perspective, Smith holds that moral problems of good and evil, right and wrong, freedom and oppression, idolatry and faithfulness must be deeply informed by the idea of a *personal* God. For him the God of the Black religious experience is such a personal God. To say that God is personal is not a theistic anthropomorphism — i.e., the mere reduction of the idea of God to some "benevolent-altruistic God Father" of the Black church. Black religious wisdom suggests that God's immanence neither negates nor fully consummates God's transcendence, mystery and wonder. To say that God is *personal* is to affirm that God is near. God cares. God suffers. God laments for and with the brokenness of humanity by taking sides for justice and righteousness and against those who oppress the poor and send the hungry away empty-handed. Thus the ethical is rooted in the idea of a personal God. Following the logic of theistic personalism as reflected in such thinkers as Borden Parker Bowne, A. C. Knudson and E. S. Brightman, Smith argues that the ontological key to who we are is located only in personalistic understanding of Divine reality: "Human beings at their best are but reflections of the reality and personality of God. This concept of personality — which itself is a sacred gift of God — offers the best clue to the meaning of reality." Perhaps the upshot of Smith's insight is simply this: There can be no authentic notion of social evangelism in the Black church without an *ethical context* that is rooted in the personal being of God.

Secondly, Smith's book is important as a work in the field of Black Christian social ethics because of the light it sheds on *personal* moral experience as a way to rethink evangelism in our time. The ethically

sensitive Christian of the Black community knows, deep down in the fabric of his being, that moral experience like religious experience is not compartmentalized or dichotomous but interwoven into a single garment of human wholeness and totality. Here the center of gravity for constructive social evangelism *is the personal.* For Black Christian believers to know God is to encounter God in personal experience. The God of human experience is personal. For Blacks, God is not a metaphysical abstract concept of classical theology but a living reality that walks and talks with them day by day. This personal ethos can be seen each Sunday in the Black church through the ritual of the "altar call" as the faithful lay their burdens down before the Fountain of Life. The speech of one deacon put it this way: "When we get troubled, we turn to God in prayer." Another sister at the altar mumbled: "Praise the Lord, I'm so glad that trouble don't last always." I am convinced that these expressions and religio-historical recitals of the faith are exemplary of many Black churches. They point to the personal grounding of evangelism and the need to hold in creative tension ethics and faith.

Thirdly, Smith's work on King is also significant for theological and ultimate reasons. It points the moral agent toward the interdependent character of human existence: of faith and doubt, of joy and sorrow, of hope and despair, of tragedy and triumph, of the forces in history that make for peace and those resistant to peace. The upshot of all of this is that ethics for the Christian moral life in *communitas* envisions a God who is at work in our world seeking to make "human life more human" and to bring fullness and wholeness through the suffering love of Jesus Christ. Smith summarizes King's contribution to constructive-normative ethics in American life with the following observation:

> Christian ethics will remain indebted to him because he deepened its understanding of the scope and the power of agapaic love. He reclaimed in our midst the Christian Gospel that God is particularly concerned for the victims of racism, oppression, poverty, and war. True religion is not only concerned with the souls of men but also with the social environment in which persons must live. The belief in a personal God of love and the infinite worth of all human personality lies at the core of his ethic and provides its motivating spirit.[9]

Besides the ultimate principle of universalism inherent in the thought of Martin Luther King, Jr., there is the posture of contextualism, which stresses the freedom of God to do a new thing in light of the reality of Black suffering in the world. For example, Major J. Jones' volume, *Christian Ethics for Black Theology*, is illustrative of this important point of departure.[10] The particular discourse of this book arises from the author's deep conviction of the inseparability of ethics and Black theology in grappling with complex social, political, economic and moral issues in the life of the Black community. Broadly considered, Jones' work implies that the search for viable norms for evangelism must hold in tension issues

of faith and justice, power and powerlessness, freedom and moral responsibility, in the life of the Black church.

This book poses such critical questions as: "Is the ethical mandate for the Black and White Christian the same?"[11] What does Christian faith have to say about the politics of liberation? What is the moral requirement of the gospel in light of the Black condition of suffering and economic injustice in America? What can Jesus say to Blacks and other oppressed minorities in their struggle for authentic freedom in a White male-dominated society? Given the gravity of these fundamental issues, what ought I, as a witnessing Christian in community, to do?

Major Jones does not attempt to tease the reader by offering a "quick-fix" or easy solution to these complex moral and theological issues which evangelism today must face. Rather he provides us with a contextual framework for ethical interpretation of the divine mandates of biblical faith as they relate to the reality and hazards of Black survival in White America. The value of this volume centers in the fact that it attempts, as I see it, to move the Black community away from a "welfare-dependency-mentality" — i.e., the euphoric contemporary equivalency of 40 acres and a mule — to what he calls the "assumed posture of freedom"[12] rooted in the ethics of hope. In this sense, those who do evangelism in the Black church are challenged to keep clear the moral link between Black suffering, on the one hand; and the eschatological promise of true liberation, on the other.

II. Social Evangelism As Good News To The Poor

We now turn our attention to the idea of the poor as the object of social evangelism.

Normatively, social evangelism may be defined as *the prophetic mediation of the gospel of Jesus Christ on behalf of the poor in their struggle for liberation, wholeness, and human fulfillment in communitas.* The language of social evangelism comes to us essentially as a language of hope and pilgrimage, of struggle and vulnerability, in the strange wilderness of White America. Indeed, the image of pilgrimage is perhaps the key metaphor that tells us something about the language of social evangelism in the life and faith of the Black church. From soul music to art-form, from Afro-American literature to the genius of the Negro spirituals, the pilgrimage motif stands as a mountain peak of hope in the midst of the valley of despair and racial demoralization of Blacks by the wider society. For the Black church, the people of God is a pilgrimage people, a suffering people of the Way, in journey with a peculiar self-understanding about the meaning of struggle and climbing.

The perceptive writer Langston Hughes knew much about the pilgrimage-motif. In the poem, "Mother to Son," we find this urging and moral wisdom:

> Well, son, I'll tell you:
> Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor —
Bare.
But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now —
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.[13]

Social Evangelism as good news to the poor means that it was for the poor that the gospel was first preached. At the heart of the church's message is the proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord and Liberator, as Reconciler and Enabler in dealing with the trial and tribulations of Black moral life. From Genesis to Revelation, the language of social evangelism means, therefore, that the very task of the evangelist is to be a *proclaimer*, to literally proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ as salvation and redemption in the here and now.

The matter was put this way by one Black preacher: "The moral imperative is to tell the story of Jesus to the bruised, the bleeding and the broken, from the back alleys of the dark ghetto to the doorsteps of the White House."Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Liberator. There is a sense in which the *proclaimer* and the story being proclaimed take on a close identity. This is not to imply, ethically discerned, that the medium *is* the message or that the medium is the absolute and full culmination of the message. Rather the language of social evangelism does mean, deep down, that the proclaimer *proclaims*. Like the woman who met Jesus at the well, there is astonishment, amazement and wonder when the spoken word becomes the living water of eternal life.

Thus the moral obligation of the proclaimer in the world is the church bearing witness to the power of the Gospel to the poor. It is a gospel of liberation, reconciliation and empowerment. It seems to me that this is the Genesis and *telos* of social evangelism for the Black church in the 90s. The imperative of social evangelism is human liberation, with the poor at the very center of what the churches, Black and White, are called to do and be about in the world. Luke the evangelist wrote:

> The spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me; He has sent me to announce good news to the poor, to proclaim release for prisoners and recovery of sight for the

> blind; to let the broken victims go free, to proclaim the year of God's favor (Lk. 4:18-19).

Perhaps the real task before the church today is to ponder the sociological, cultural, economic, and political implications of God's favor to the poor. The Kingdom is announced to the poor; the Kingdom belongs to the poor.

There are at least three immediate functions of the Church in light of current tasks with respect to social evangelism. First, the Church that bears the name of Jesus Christ must function in such a way that the good news is actually preached to the poor. Here the Church is called to function as a defender of the poor, as a voice for the voiceless, the weak, and the powerless ones in our midst.

Secondly, the Church is called to "glorify God" by functioning as a center for moral action in dealing with controversial and complex social issues. Here it may function as a forum of constructive reflection where issues, conflicts, and problems are hammered out for the good of God's Kingdom of love and righteousness.

Thirdly, if the language of social evangelism means anything, it is that the church must function to comfort the afflicted (i.e., the God's poor, the *anau*) and to afflict the comfortable. The affirmation of the gospel for the poor, the *anau*, is the "good news" of God's redeeming power and grace in their behalf. Such a posture on social evangelism may be risky but ethically challenging because it enables the *ecclesia* to engage in a new hermeneutic of evangelism in light of the social reality of oppression. Robert McAfee Brown, in his book *Theology in a New Key*, hints at this possibility for social ethicists and theologians.[14] Such a hermeneutic calls the *ecclesia*, the true people of God, to solidarity with the poor and the disempowered of the land. The phrase offered by Brown is the "hermeneutic of hope and engagement" relative to the church's proclamation of the gospel in response to the needs of the poor.

The impetus for such a hermeneutic with respect to social evangelism is informed by at least two presuppositions of the Black religious experience in America. These include: 1) "The God Who Takes Sides" (Ex. 1:8-14; 2:23-25; 3:7); 2) "To Know God Is To Do Justice" (Jer. 22:13-16).

III. Social Evangelism: From Love-Talk To Justice-Walk

So much of who we are, what we do, and the goals we set for ourselves as members of the human community depends on a viable concept of justice in light of the Christian ideal of love. In the volume, *A New American Justice*, Daniel Maguire points out that there are three sides of justice. The tripartite nature of these modes include: *individual* justice, *social* justice, and *distributive* justice.[15] While such a theoretical distinction appears to be rather formalistic, it does aid the ethically sensitive person to see the way by which social evangelism for Blacks in the church and society must hinge on a justice axle. Put another way, there must

be greater tension between "love talk" and "justice walk," and a bold move in this direction in the life and faith of the church universal. This is not to upstage love as a primary norm in Christian social ethics in America, but rather to accent the justice-motif more sharply, as the people of God seek to be faithful to the whole gospel.

From a historical perspective, the language of Christian ethics, as perceived through the filters of mainline Protestant Churches in North America, is the language of love. For many ethical theologians, pastors, educators, and teachers of the Church, the principle of love is the distinctive hallmark of Christian ethics. In many mainline Protestant Churches I suspect that there is a tendency to understand love as well as the evangelistic claims of the gospel as a principle separate from justice. Hence, there is the impulse to engage in "love-talk" as an object of moral discourse, while surreptitiously ignoring the radical claims of justice in behalf of the poor and disempowered groups in American society and the world.

Analytically, justice is a fundamental ethical concept. From the Sophists down through Hume to the pragmatists and Christian realists of the modern times, the notion of justice is exceedingly vital for Christian witness and the moral life. Familiar to us all is Reinhold Niebuhr's triadic interpretation of the dialectical interplay between love and justice. For Neibuhr, love is the law of life, it is the way persons in human *communitas* are called by God to live in the world, if they are to be responsive to the needs of the neighbor. As self-giving and outgoing acceptance of others, we have in the language of love both the motive for justice and the ultimate norm for social action on the part of the church in the world.

For example, there are at least three discernible caveats in Niebuhr's interpretation of the relationship of love and justice. First, love demands justice since the values of absolute freedom and equality are never fully realized under given historical conditions. In this sense, "love-talk," however eloquent and theologically sound, cannot be a substitute either in the pulpit or the market place for real justice. We need a stubborn sense of justice in a society marked by the sins of racism, sexism, oppression; and by the conflicting claims, interests, and loyalties of different social groups. Secondly, justice opens up the possibilities for greater mutuality, equal respect, and harmony among social groups in the ultimate quest for genuine liberation beyond the particularity of class, color, or ethnic identity. Perhaps it is here that we see justice as a dynamic instrument of love — seeking to serve a higher good.

Paradoxically we discover in the community of faith that justice is always critiqued by love, and love fulfills justice as the righteousness of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Thirdly, justice functions at its best in the interest of equality by utilizing the "moral power"of the disempowered to enforce its judgments for the social welfare of all. For Niebuhr, love at its best serves the interest of human *communitas* by its willingness to sacrifice, to suffer, and to struggle for the good of the neighbor and God's Kingdom in the world.

According to Aristotle, justice means to give to each person his due.

What is one's "due" should not be determined normatively by class, status, or social background, but by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to do a new thing in human *communitas.* What social evangelism in the Black church calls for is not an either/or stance of love and justice, but one that sees the preaching task of ministry to be interlocked with the *practice* of justice in society. Hence, there must be a move from "love-talk" to "justice-walk" in the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.[16] For example, the danger of "love-talk" is the preaching of the Word of God without commitment to the object of the Word as truth and transformation. The danger of "love-talk" means the preaching of the Word from the pulpit without moral considerations for those trapped in the "pit" of poverty, alienation, and injustice — living on the ragged edges of despair. The danger of "love-talk" is the preaching of the Word as mere entertainment without political engagement of the people of God in confronting complex issues of black survival in White America. For social evangelism, what I mean to be suggesting, therefore, is that "love-talk" without "justice-walk" renders the preaching of the Word ahistorical. For those who would be faithful, the first order of business of the churches in the 90s is not sentimental love but radical justice for the poor and voiceless ones in the land.

In *A New American Justice,* Daniel Maguire makes precisely this point. He writes: "Christians regularly miss the fact that in their moral credo, love is not the first order of business. Justice is. Preaching love bypasses the problems of the social order where love is not, and for the foreseeable future will not be, the energizing power of social existence." Interpersonally, love may reign; politically, there will be justice or degrading deprivation. American Christians, drunk on love-talk, have too often missed this.[17]

IV. The Ethics of Communitas

So far in our ethical reflections we have already suggested, given the meandering search for norms along the edges of black theology and Christian ethics, that it is imperative to see evangelism as a function of social justice and *communitas.* What remains to be said is a brief word on the theological end of *communitas.* The ethics of *communitas,* insofar as social evangelism is concerned, is not an end in itself. Rather it is a means toward the ultimate end of the Kingdom of God. It is tied in to our understanding of professional ministry with our sense of being, purpose, identity, and belonging as Christian to Christian in the world.

For the corpus of social evangelism, therefore, the ethics of *communitas* may entail three interrelated concerns by which the church in the future needs to move or at least have a sense of theological direction. First, the ethics of *communitas* is aimed ultimately, or could be aimed, at the life and witness of the congregation, at the creation of a more genuine *eucharistic* community. What this means is that, as the church proclaims the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the world, we remember that the centering of our Christian identity is deeply reflected in the Lord's

Supper, in the breaking of bread and the sharing of a common cup. Theologically, these gifts of bread and wine symbolize radical solidarity and commitment to God's righteousness and redemptive love. They tell us something about our moral identity as a Christian community seeking to be responsive to the neighbor's needs.

For example, the traditional eucharistic song of the Black church, "Let us break bread together," is a powerful metaphor in ethics of *communitas* because it points the ethically sensitive Christian, not in the direction of privatistic faith and social religiosity, but in the direction of human solidarity, or the "we-consciousness" as a people of God. Thus the real clue to our identity in the proclamation of the "good news" of Jesus Christ before the world is not a "me-ethic" in the Christian moral life, but an affirmation of a "we-ethic" under the Lordship of the Crucified and Risen One.

Secondly, the ethics of *communitas* implies that Christian programs of evangelism in the future must be far more attentive to an ethic of *relationship-building* than merely an increase in church membership. Beyond the "numbers-game" or the finely-honed evangelistic technology for bringing people to Christ, the organic task of the faithful pastor and theologian is to grapple with the crucial questions, "What is church growth for? How does it assist the church in responding to the ethical mandate to seek justice, peace, and authentic freedom in human society? Does church growth necessarily edify the body of Christ in regard to the poor and oppressed in the Lord?" These questions leave much to ponder on the part of us all. They test the truth and tenacity of genuine *communitas* by insisting on the importance of distributive justice, mutuality, fellowship, and good will in regard to Christian programs of evangelism. Politically discerned, the ethics of *communitas* is an ethic of relationship-building where the church of the living God works to build a more just and sustainable society. Without a willingness to work on the part of us all there can be no human future reflective of God's justice and suffering love.

Ethically, I think the evangelistic injunction is clear about the value of purposive work. Scripture is filled with many references to work and relationship-building. The bible teaches us to work while it is day. Such moral imperatives on evangelistic work may include: ". . .be rich in good works" (I Tim. 6:18); ". . .work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13); ". . .watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (II Tim. 4:5). In spite of the perennial danger of work's righteousness which we constantly face, it seems to me that the greater tragedy is to ignore the unique opportunity to work at relationship-building in the body of Christ. This, I believe, is a significant expression of social evangelism. To be sure, the work of the church in behalf of relationship-building is a crucial form of what Letty Russell calls "curative *diakonia*,"[18] i.e., bringing healing and help to those victimized and disempowered in the wider society.

Thirdly, the ethics of *communitas* in the breath and life of social evangelism calls the church universal to a new sense of *renewal,* transformation, and wholeness in the midst of our brokenness. It is a strange paradox that the language of *communitas* is both a language of comedy and tragedy, of triumph and defeat, of hope and despair, of promise-making and promise-breaking, of moral struggle for the public good and apathy that works against the public good. The language of *communitas* calls the church universal to embrace a style of social evangelism which opens us up to the pain, suffering, and yearnings of the poor and disempowered in our midst. Indeed, I suspect that the language of genuine *communitas* means that by identification with the poor and suffering ones in church and society we participate more fully in the true character of God. Ultimately, God's suffering in and through the person of Jesus Christ gives renewal to the whole of human creation and provides the church with the courage it needs to proclaim liberation to the oppressed, reconciliation to the broken, healing to the sick, sight to the blind, strength to faint-hearted, food to the hungry, and justice to those victimized by unjust structures of the world. This, I submit, is the ultimate challenge and eschatological task of social evangelism in the Black church.

Finally, if our thesis is correct that social evangelism in the Black church must be understood increasingly as a function of justice and *communitas,* then the internal values that lead us into the future hold eschatological promise only to the extent that they reflect compassion, moral struggle, suffering love, and above all unity of the people of God in the service of humanity. So basic is the vision of unity in the gospel that our Lord Jesus Christ yearns that the church not only be free but that she be one.

Beyond the traditional images of Jesus Christ as Redeemer, Teacher and Pattern for the moral life, social ethics of the Black religious experience must provide the church with a greater sense of direction and self-understanding of Jesus Christ as Liberator and Unifier. As Unifier Jesus Christ binds up our wounds and hurts; Jesus Christ as Unifier mends the brokenness at the center of our being brought on by the pain of injustice and exploitation; Jesus Christ the Unifier, through the mystery of grace and passion, restores human *communitas,* not by the bastions of political authority but by the paradoxical weakness of suffering justice and love on the cross.

Social evangelism in the 1990s is called to image or bear witness to this bipolar metaphor, supportive of both unity and inclusive *communitas,* if the ultimate vision of social evangelism is to become a reality.

NOTES

[1]Frederick S. Carney, "Living the Truth in Love," *Perkins Journal* (Fall, 1981), pp. 36-37.

[2]James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (N.Y.: The Seabury Press, 1975) pp. 196-202.

[3]J. Deotis Roberts, *Roots of a Black Future* (Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1980) pp. 131-132.

[4]George D. Kelsey, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man* (N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), Chaps. 1-2.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 10.

[6]Preston Williams, "The Problem of a Black Ethic," in *Quest for a Black Theology,* edited by James J. Gardiner and J. Deotis Roberts (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1971).

[7]Ervin Smith, *The Ethics of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1981).

[8]*Ibid.*, pp. 11-14.

[9]*Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.

[10]Major J. Jones, *Christian Ethics for Black Theology* (Nashville: The Abingdon Press, 1974).

[11]*Ibid.*, pp. 16ff.

[12]*Ibid.*, pp. 184-191.

[13]Cited in *Ebony* magazine (August, 1981), pp. 52ff.

[14]Robert McAfee Brown, *Theology in a New Key* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978).

[15]Daniel C. Maguire, *A New American Justice* (N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1980), pp. 67ff.

[16]See, for example, Frederick Herzog, *Justice Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1980).

[17]Maguire, p. 118.

[18]Letty M. Russell, *The Future of Partnership* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), pp. 118ff.

A CHURCH SEEKING TO BE INCLUSIVE

James M. Capers

Three Lutheran denominations in the United States and the Caribbean at their constituting convention in 1987 decided to become a different kind of church at their merger. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, begun in January, 1988, was one of those churches that decided at its inception to reflect the diversity characteristic of this land both now and in the coming decades.

As a church of the Reformation, the ELCA and its predecessor bodies tends to be a church which presently reflects membership made up of the cradle of its beginnings. The church was largely German and Scandinavian not only in background but also in culture. Once the immigrants from those northern European countries came to the United States, they did not readily realize that there would be a time when opportunities for receiving members would no longer primarily reflect the cultural homogeneity that was their past experience. Instead, those opportunities through the decades would reflect a cultural diversity, for which in many ways that they are not now ready.

Ethnic Goals

The founding documents of the ELCA are clear as to what the intention of this church is: "It shall be a goal of this church that within 10 years of its establishment its membership shall include at least 10 percent people of color and/or primary language other than English." In other words, this church will in every way endeavor to increase its membership of people who are African American, Native American, Asian, and Spanish speaking.

There is little doubt that a church whose constituting convention ratified such goals did not look into the future to know what this was going to mean. The church over the two year period has met in its several committees to discover the implications of such a vision. Any church that would take this vision seriously is going to have to look at its leadership to see whether it is prepared to look at this future.

James M. Capers is Director of Evangelism Outreach for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The church in its documents decided that all of its national boards would reflect at least 10% persons of color. The staffs of the churchwide organization, which includes almost 400 persons, is presently more than 10%, although those serving as directors of programing are less than that percentage.

At the very beginning, members of the church used the code words "inclusivity" or "inclusiveness" to speak about this concern. However, over the two year period the language of "inclusivity" has given way to what is now termed "multicultural" or "multiculturalism." The term "inclusivity" now refers to the full involvement of all persons, including women and physically challenged persons. There is now a recognition that what we are looking for here is not assimilation, but integration, which takes seriously the gifts that all persons bring with them as God has endowed them with certain gifts and capacities.

> "Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision which is made in the flesh by hands—, remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are mutual citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:11-22).

The writer of this circular letter makes some interesting claims concerning Christ that are of benefit to the whole church: that something very unusual happens to people who come under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is reminiscent of a Gospel song that goes "If it had not been for the Lord on my side, (Tell me,) where would I be?"

The writer is making the point that Jesus Christ makes a difference ultimately, and, if we would allow him to, penultimately. He makes the claim that in Jesus Christ God is able to bring together both Gentile and Jew and make them one. The writer says that whatever walls existed, whether made on earth or anywhere else, Christ comes with a sledgehammer that is made in the shape of a Cross and is able to break down these walls so that those who were once two, become one.

These words become life and judgment. They are life because, even in the wake of what is now going on in Southern Africa, Namibia and Eastern Europe, we can see that "There is Hope for the future." But these works are also judgment because here in the land of the free and brave we are a nation riddled by racism and classism; hence the Christian church continues to set up within itself walls of partition. These are the same walls that Jesus through his cross broke down so that there might be one person. He did not wish for us to go and rebuild these walls, because Jesus came into the world to bring about a different humanity.

Therefore I would like to propose that there is a great need for us to recapture the vision of Christ's church. No matter what you and I see of the church today, "God had another intention."

The Face of America

Sociologists tell us that we are in the midst of creating a more polarized society. Since the era of the 70's we have become more and more a country where the poor are getting poorer and the rich richer. As we go into the 90's, unless there is some drastic change in the way that the economy is built—and there are few indicators of that happening—this creation of two nations, one rich, one poor, will continue. Certainly, this continual forging of two separate communities has something to do with the technological revolution that persists, but there are also other reasons. Few of us should doubt that because there is institutionalized racism in this country, there is a relationship between being a person of color and being on the lower end of the economic ladder, no matter what class you particularly want to choose. So if the church in this country is going to attempt to live out the intention of God in Christ, it will also have to address the issue of institutional discrimination on the basis of color and culture and deal with those who maintain discriminatory power.

There is a calculation, all things being equal, that in this country we will experience a population growth of Asians, African Americans, Spanish-speaking people, and Native Americans to the point where by the year 2000 we (Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American) will be 25% of the U.S. population; 29% by the year 2010. In most cases, this growth will take place in our major cities. Even though this is a sociological understanding, the spiritual implication of this is that the congregations of the church will need to make a major shift in the understanding they have of themselves. If they have seen themselves as places for chaplaincies, or places to remember the days gone by, or social clubs to renew acquaintances, or even places to live out their activism, that kind of understanding will have to undergo a major shift in favor of another understanding, because "God had another intention."

The Lutheran Situation

Lutherans, in general, who have allowed their churches to continue to be captive to Northern European practice in a pluralistic world, along with

Christians of all types who have made the gospel synonymous with their own culture, must take the plunge in the depths of a cleansing flood which can make all things new. In many ways, I believe that this cleansing begins with a "back to the bible" approach, not in a literalistic manner, but in a way which grasps what God wants of the church today.

Evangelism or evangelization is clearly the one mission that the Church of Jesus Christ has all it's own. There is no other organism or organization in the world that has that particular *raison d'être.* The church is the only institution which has the mission of proclaiming to masses of people that the Kingdom of God is at hand, having come in the person and work of Jesus the Christ. So first of all, we need to realize that there is a particular role which the church has that is unlike any other community of persons. The church is in the world, among other things, to say with Peter that "There is no other name under heaven given among humanity by which we must be saved."

What is the Theology?

Now, for those of us who live in the legacy of the Reformation, any theology that purposes to be Lutheran begins with God and with God's action in history. The bible in no uncertain terms describes God as One who loves. In other words the action of God proceeds from the standpoint of God's feeling, God's pre-disposition. God is totally committed to this human race. But then after God loved, God also acted. God loved and heard the people of Israel in their bondage of slavery and then acted in history to deliver them from their oppression (Exodus 3:7-8). The writer of the Gospel of John said that "God so loved the world that He gave. . ."(John 3:16). So it is as if God in God's self develops a perspective and then acts out of that perspective.

God's action comes as a response to the oppressive situation in which people find themselves. Evangelization must consider the fact that oppression by the Adversary is an important factor in the condition of humanity as God finds it.

On one occasion Jesus talks about the condition of a man who is possessed with demons. Jesus says:

> "Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house" (Matthew 12:29 ff.).

Jesus here is referring to the ministry that his Father has given Him. The Adversary, Satan, is the arch enemy of the Father and therefore also of the Son of Man. Or consider the way in which Matthew describes the crowds who surrounded Jesus. He says:

> "When he (Jesus) saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36).

In other words, the people to whom Jesus was ministering were being harassed or troubled as one might be of demons. Therefore the establish-

ment of the Kingdom of God has something to do with binding the enemy and then plundering what the enemy has. With this understanding, evangelization becomes a cosmic event in which the church participates in the freeing up of persons from the shackles that bind. Jesus Christ, who pre-eminently is a sign and symbol of the Kingdom of God having come into the world, is the person to whom the church points all people that they might know in their own lives the freedom which comes by knowing him.

Cross-cultural or Multicultural Evangelism: Jesus' Intention

Those are some general statements that we can accept if we speak concerning evangelism. But when we raise the question of what God's intention is, as it relates to "cross-cultural or multicultural evangelism," we need to inquire of Jesus, "Lord, what was your intention?"

As we read the New Testament, we do get a flavor of the intention of Jesus. It is true that Jesus' main work was among those who were Jews. But it is interesting to look at the people with whom Jesus personally surrounded himself. The twelve apostles were certainly from different walks of life. But there was unity among them, not based upon any mono-cultural understanding, but based upon commitment to him. Simon who was called the Zealot, a militant, had become one with a traitor-publican like Matthew. The wealthy women whose economic means made the traveling ministry of Jesus and the disciples possible (Lk. 8:1-3) had been mixed with the humble women, some of ill repute (Lk. 7:36-39). And of course, women had been accepted on the same basis as men.

We might then stop and ask the Spirit, "Lord, what was your intention?"

We are also told that on the day of Pentecost, the gospel was proclaimed to a large multitude of pilgrims that had come to Jerusalem for the great Jewish Feast of Weeks. The multicultural nature of the multitude is stressed in the narrative because it refers to the variety of languages, lands and cultures represented and that the mighty works of God were proclaimed in the indigenous languages and dialects of many lands. This passage has often been seen as the reversal of the confusion at the Tower of Babel passage in Genesis 11. In other words, even though there is division in cultures, even by virtue of language and background, the gospel has the ability to bridge those gaps. Certainly, the Christian community that resulted from Pentecost was made up mainly of Jewish persons. Yet their commonality was not found in their Jewishness; it was found in and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus had another vision. He did not have a vision of a two-fold church that would show itself in the world as one for the poor and one for the rich. His was not a vision of one church for the upper class and another for the underclass. His was not a vision of one church for the White folks and another for the Black folks in this country. His was a vision for the church of Christ.

Furthermore, we can make some general comments about what the scriptures teach concerning multicultural evangelism. The first is that for the church, when it was Spirit-filled, there was no other kind of evangelism than multicultural. When the church was caught up in the Spirit, it was able to reach beyond the barriers that divide.

Summary of the Scriptures

And so what do the scriptures say?

1. That in the early church the gospel was proclaimed to all people, whether Jews or gentiles, slaves or free, rich or poor, without partiality.
2. The breaking down of the barriers that separate people in the world was regarded as an essential aspect of the gospel, not merely as a result of it.
3. That the church not only grew, but it grew across cultural barriers.
4. That the apostles never contemplated the possibility of forming mono-cultural or mono-racial churches.
5. That there may have been times when the believers were accused of abandoning their own culture to reach another culture, but there is no indication that the apostles answered that by making adjustments to avoid the charge.

Making Some Changes

What we have considered is an understanding that God had another intention. And so, what must we do?

First, those of us who have both intentionally and unintentionally reached out to only those people who are like us need to begin with *confession*. And *confession* simply means agreeing with God that we have not been faithful.

A couple of years ago a friend of mine, Dody Matthias, sent me a recording of an anti-racial seminar that took place on a seminary campus. She told a story about her uncle, a man who was once driven and imprisoned by alcohol. He hurt many people in the process. He finally was confronted, and desired to seek sobriety. He did not deny, but owned the fact that he was an alcoholic. This man learned to introduce himself by saying: "Hello, my name is _____ and I'm an alcoholic." So my friend introduced herself to that seminary gathering by saying: "Hello, my name is Dody, and I'm a recovering racist."

The beginning for any real change in outreach is confession. It begins by acknowledging that we have not reached far enough, that we've been captivated by the worlds that have become our prisons.

What must we do next? We must be open to being *educated.* Even if you have taken course #101 in being African American or being Japanese, don't then go and assume that you know all there is to know about being African American or Japanese. Just admit the fact that you are in process. God is in the process of moving you from one degree of glory to the next.

You must not assume that your culture has taught you all that there is to know or has told you the truth. And so you must seek out teachers from those other cultures. When you seek out these teachers, be wary of the ones who continually agree with you. Find the ones who will give you another perspective and in the midst of that, tell you the truth.

Education here also means learning about your own past; getting a sense of who you are and being willing to see it and accept it. When you begin to do this, you will have to name the demons; call them by name: racism, chauvinism, classism, ageism. And when you find them, begin to pray diligently so that you are able to say like the song-writer: "I'm not the same; because everything has changed because of Christ."

Thirdly, we will have to learn to *identify*. The Gospel of John tells us of the incarnation. It tells us of God becoming human and dwelling among us full of grace and truth. Jesus in his own baptism "identified with us;" he cried, and felt the pain, He laughed and experienced the celebration; he was where we are and have been. To reach out beyond barriers into other cultures is to go where they go and be among them, not just to give, but to receive. You are not making the mistake of losing your own culture and own sense of identity; you just no longer assume that the realities of life and faith can only be seen through your own cultural lens.

Fourthly, we need to live in *agape.* The goal of *agape* is to seek the highest good for another person with no strings attached.

One of the telling attitudes of the disciples in the days of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is that none of them thought that what one owned belonged to oneself. Disciples were willing to give up what belonged to them for the common good. There was a vulnerability among the disciples so that they were willing to give up that which they thought was so dear. One thing I have found with those Christians who open themselves up to this possibility: they do not remain the same. They don't walk or talk the same. They are converted. They become "a new creation. The old has passed away, the new has come."

Finally, we will need to be concerned about the *type of testimony* that is being given in the community. In my use of the word testimony I am not talking about "your story" or a prepared statement of what God has done in your life. I am talking instead about the sermon that people of the community are hearing every single day.

Even though as Christians we need not allow what the world thinks to govern our attitudes and actions, nevertheless, as the scripture says, "let not even your good be spoken of as evil."

You must find a means of asking people of the other cultures: "what does our ministry mean to you?" In other words, what kind of public relations, what kind of reputation, what kind of response is there in them because of your ministry? You will be found to be faithful when, as Paul says to Timothy, ". . . moreover they must be well thought of by outsiders, or they may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

Conclusion

One day as Jesus was praying, his disciples asked to be taught how to pray. Jesus then taught them saying: "When you pray, pray like this: Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

I remember evangelist Tom Skinner once referred to this passage, and said basically that the disciples were being called to be a means of doing the Father's will on earth. And so they were to be live models on earth of what is going on in heaven. And so it is for those of us to name the name of Jesus Christ. We are to be live models on earth of what is going on in heaven.

The Book of Revelation records that on the Island of Patmos, John saw in his heavenly vision "a great multitude which no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" If it is true that John saw that in heaven, then we, in every way we can, need to attempt to model that on earth.

God had another intention. This focus is clearly difficult both to face and to do. The ways in which this present culture leads us and forms us altogether pits one against the other, and so we are going to have to begin with some other assumptions about life and especially what Jesus' intention is for the church. The powers of death are at work to divide and prevail. But Jesus said: "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

EVANGELISM AND SLAVERY: INCONGRUITY AND INTEGRITY

William E. Pannell

A friend from India once expressed puzzlement over the phenomenon of African slaves accepting the religion of their captors. "Why did they become Christians in the face of such moral outrage?" he asked. It is a good question and it deserves a better answer than this space and purpose will allow. To his "why" must be added a "how"—How, in spite of obvious crimes against Africans, did white Christians gain enough integrity to preach the gospel and have Africans believe it? And then another question, What did the Africans do with the gospel they received?

European Evangelization

Africans were subjects of the evangelistic efforts of Europeans long before the Mayflower. As Englishmen were busily engaged in developing trade with Africa, and as this enterprise prospered, especially in West Africa, these encounters with "the heathen" took on serious evangelistic implications. As Englishmen began to develop a concern for the souls of Africans, they were exposed to forces embedded deep within their cultural psyche. There was the problem of whiteness as an expression of self-identity. As Winthrop Jordan has pointed out, long before England knew of the existence of Black people, the "concept of blackness was loaded with intense meaning. . . Black was an emotionally partisan color, the handmaid and symbol of baseness and evil, a sign of danger and repulsion."[1] The opposite of this was whiteness, which for Englishmen served as a symbol of purity, virtue, beauty, and godliness.

They were also struggling to synthesize their understanding of the gospel and their commitment to European culture. This struggle came to focus upon a biblical anthropology on the one hand, which argued that all mankind was created in the image of God, and a Euro-centered racialism on the other, which argued that while God might be the Creator of all mankind, racial equality, or even equality among Christians, was not what God had in mind. Yet the gospel clearly demanded that "all people

---

William E. Pannell is Associate Professor of Evangelism at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, and a past president of the Academy for Evangelism.

everywhere repent and believe." Evangelism was mandated and the gospel had to be preached to the ends of the earth. Thus evangelization and cultural-identity were to move on parallel tracks as Western expansionism finally reached the shore of the New World.

White Man's Religion

The Protestant church in America, from which much evangelistic activity proceeded, was, from its inception, a European church. It was white, male, and imbued with a strong sense of mission. It was informed, like much of the country, by common sense understandings of Scripture and a growing sense of national destiny. Commenting on "two realities" which shaped key factors in the make-up of Protestantism, Martin Marty observes that "the first of these is racial; Protestantism, for over three centuries was a white man's religion, and even today it remains statistically so. It went wherever white men went, and other people who were drawn to it were drawn more or less on white men's terms. They had to acquire the ethos and outlook of people in a white history, nuanced in styles of piety, family life, hymns, ways of stating doctrine and patterns of etiquette.

White was the measure: all else was derivative, dependant, exceptional and mutational."[2]

The Second Great Awakening

The greatest impetus for the conversion of Africans came from the Second Great Awakening. Until then progress toward converting Africans was bogged down in attitudes of indifference and the fear that conversion would imply equality with whites. After all, people converted to the same Father would be brothers and sisters, as the argument went, and there were any number of Christians who both saluted that reality and feared its implications. Evangelism was also frustrated by two other problems. One was the requirements of the establishment churches which made of conversion a rather lengthy ordeal. Education and learning were deemed to be of paramount importance. Then too, the Anglican church in the South was without a bishop and thus the ministry became largely the province of laypeople. These were the same laypersons who owned large plantations full of slaves. But perhaps the real fear affecting evangelism among Africans was that with conversion to Christ would come the instinct to freedom in the here and now.

But with the outburst of the Awakening, evangelism was released from many of these fears. Experience, not education, was the rule of the day. Freedom in worship beyond rigid liturgy was celebrated by Whites as well as Black seekers. And a man could be converted and baptised, and without education could practice his faith by preaching to others. Africans were no more successful in resisting the movement of the Holy Spirit than were their White counterparts and hundreds were swept up in the new movement. Sadly, however, the Awakening did not extend into the deep South, being confined to the upper South and the North. This meant that many

slaves were untouched by this wave of Christian influence.

Free Slaves and Slave Revolt

The second impetus for evangelism among Blacks grew out of the experience of free slaves, especially in urban centers. This energy was not altogether related to revival *per se*, nor was it merely an evangelistic impulse. Rather this new energy derived from the connectedness between Christian conversion and African understandings about the wholeness of life. Religion in Africa was a life-oriented reality; it integrated all of life. It also spoke with profound simplicity about the dignity of persons, in life and death and in the after-life. From this connection it was easy to argue that to be Christian was to struggle for an integration of all of life's concerns, of which freedom was uppermost.

It was this connection that seems to have been an integral part in some of the most notorious revolts among slaves. Not all of the leaders of these revolts made this connection; indeed most were not that impressed with the record of Christians to believe in the potential of Christianity to address grievous ills. But others were. Gabriel Prosser and Nat Turner were the most pronounced in their use of Christian preaching and ideals in their attempts to marshall followings. Later, the eloquent Frederick Douglas would demonstrate a profound understanding of the connection between a vital Christian experience and resistence to oppression. He would, at the same time, denounce a quasi-Christianity which would be used to thwart the pursuit of justice and freedom.

Passionate Faith

What did the slaves and their later generations do with the gospel? They began to integrate all of life around it. Religious tradition was one thing; a passionate faith in a living God was quite another. Put together, the slaves made of the faith an all-encompassing force. They understood a "crucified God" long before theologians conceived the phrase and they put it into song. To ask the question, "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?" was to have already answered it if one was a slave.

They sang their new faith. With rhythms and harmonies learned in the homeland, Africans forged a new hymnody, spirituals which gave cadence to faith and melody to hope. In these spirituals is recorded the theology of a new church, a new people in the land. This music was to have a profound impact on all music in America. It was this music that was the most profound expression of worship among slaves. To be sure it could and did serve as code-music when it was necessary to "steal away," but music was an expression of a profound faith in the living God who, among the oppressed, promised deliverance. After all, "Didn't God Deliver Dan'l?"

Preaching and Witness

Black believers preached this Gospel, and they told their stories about

how "they got over." Preaching and witness, hand in hand, helped spread the Good News. Africans have always been good story tellers; indeed much of African culture is preserved by master tellers of a people's story. So story-telling became perhaps the chief method of spreading the gospel. Black people did evangelism; they did spread the faith. They engaged in missions under the most pressing circumstances. They founded congregations in the Caribbean and in Africa, laying the foundation for one of the great untold stories in missions history.

Social Imperative

Perhaps one of the most important contributions of the religious world made by slaves was the practice of the Christian faith which did not allow for the dichotomies between sacred and secular, worship and world, evangelism and justice, that has marked the history of white churches in the West. God was one Lord, the Creator and the Redeemer, and theology was nothing if it wasn't ethics. Thus it is no surprise that the stalwarts of the political debate and social reform came from the ranks of the churches. Men went from the pulpits to congress, and when disenfranchised, back to their pulpits to wreak even greater havoc on the existing order. This activism, rather then being some sort of aberration to their faith, was viewed as an integral part and logical extension of it.

Prayer and Justice

Finally, something needs be said about prayer. Any history of slave religion cannot fail to confront an oppressed people whose only recourse was to God, and who, in that condition, found through prayer a "way when there was no way." In Eugene Genovese's fine work on "the world the slaves made" he quotes a former slave from Texas who explained the place of prayer for slaves: "Us niggers," he said, "used to have a prayin' ground down in the hollow and some time we come out of the field, between eleven and twelve at night, scorchin' and burnin' up with nothin' to eat and we wants to ask the good Lord to have mercy."[3] From this confession of need, Black men and women rose to face a new day; and by extension, it could be argued that every breakthrough in social improvement came out of a prayer meeting. Evangelism and justice, education for children, the founding of colleges, and the establishment of a business—they all were anchored in the prayin' ground of African peoples. They prayed the gospel into the very fabric of a new and emerging society.

The gospel the slaves received was not always the gospel God intended for humankind. When these sons and daughters of Africa found out for themselves what the God of Moses and Daniel and Jesus intended, they forged a new chapter in the history of the Christian movement: "Aina that good news?"

NOTES

[1] Winthrop D. Jordan, *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 5-6.

[2] *Protestantism: Its Churches and Cultures, Rituals and Doctrines, Yesterday and Today* (New York, Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1972), pp. 189, 190.

[3] Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), p. 238.

EVANGELIZATION WITHIN A RELIGIOUSLY PLURAL SOCIETY

Ted Peters

It is difficult these days to justify evangelizing for Christ. We feel guilty if we do. Why? One of the reasons is that we have internalized the dogma of pluralism. Christian critics who embrace dogmatic pluralism blast away at Christendom for the narrowness of its view of God, for its history of religious triumphalism, and especially for the alleged tie between evangelization and third world colonialism. The Christian commitment to the absoluteness of God and the centrality of Jesus Christ and the presence of the Spirit are assumed to constitute the religious opiate of Western culture that has supposedly made us insensitive to the richness of non-Western spiritual traditions. We are told that we have only partial knowledge of God but we assume we have absolute knowledge. We are told that because we symbolize Jesus in terms of Christ the king that we naturally envision our mission in imperialistic terms, and this in turn has led to complicity in the exploitation and oppression of the world's peoples.

Evangelization is under fire. And we eat this fire. By virtue of our faith commitment, we Christians listen in earnest to such criticisms—criticisms which, curiously enough, come primarily from other Christians rather than non-Christians. We internalize the accusations. We grieve over our ancestors who perpetrated the crimes of imperialism. We repent. We seek to put behind us the narrow-minded absolutizing of Christian belief which must have led to all these bad things. And to demonstrate the sincerity of our repentence, we try to distance ourselves from those who practice evangelization. We join in the chorus of critics which vilifies all those other Christians—those absolutists and imperialists!—and make public promise to do things differently. We commit ourselves to open-mindedness, to sensitivity to traditions different from ours, to advocating inclusivity, and to limiting religious criticism to ourselves while celebrating the marvelous spiritual insights of non-Christian traditions.

This I take to be the current mood of the leadership in many mainline Protestant denominations in North America that have adopted the prin-

---

Ted Peters is Professor of Systematic Theology at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. This paper was presented to the 4th Annual Conference of The Academy for Evangelists sponsored by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary in June, 1990.

ciple of dogmatic pluralism. What is good about this mood, of course, is that it is born out of a genuine love for people different from ourselves and, in addition, it shows the Christian capacity for self-criticism. What is not so good about it, however, is that it feeds on a neurotic tendency in Christian piety, namely, the tendency to wallow in guilt to the degree that it renders us disfunctional. One of the functions which we end up unable to perform with vigor is evangelizing for Christ.

Having lost the moral confidence requisite to enthusiastic evangelization, we satisfy our sick piety by promulgating vacuous platitudes about inclusivity and occasionally appointing commissions to enter into interreligious dialogue.[1]

This condition of enervated immobility is not due, in my judgment, to any incurable Christian disease. It is due rather to the debilitating effects of a temporary overdose of pluralism.[2] As if we were infected with a flu virus, the period of pluralism is causing us to remain home and miss a bit of time at our work—our work being the sharing of the Gospel.[3] What is the cure? As with the flu, no cure is sure. But in this case, resting at home in bed is not the prescription. Rather, I suggest we swallow a hearty dose of trinitarian truth. In the pages that follow, I will say what I mean by this. Before prescribing this cure, however, I will offer my diagnosis by distinguishing between *descriptive pluralism,* which describes our religiously plural society as made up of separate belief systems, from *dogmatic pluralism,* which tries to keep it that way. Then I will propose that the commitment to trinitarian truth might be the therapy that could lead us to healthy evangelization. All this medical advice I offer with the hope that the patient will quickly recover.

What happens if we do not recover? Will the sharing of the gospel cease? Probably not. The Holy Spirit is perfectly capable of finding others more ready and able to work. Sharing the gospel itself produces new witnesses to the gospel. If we stay sick, we will soon find our denominational groups permanently out of a job. What else could we expect if we miss too much time at our work? One day we may sit up in our beds and peer through our windows only to see evangelizing pursued by other more vigorous workers. We might then find ourselves tempted with envy.

Two Types of Pluralism

The diagnosis is pluralism. The word has two different meanings, one healthy and helpful, the other deleterious. Too frequently the two get confused. Clarification will help.

The first I will identify as *descriptive pluralism.* It is *the side-by-side existence of various and contradictory perspectives, worldviews, or approaches to human understanding and living.* This variety of perspectives covers a spectrum from mere differences of opinion at one end to mutually exclusive claims to ultimate truth at the other. At the first end we might find a Republican disagreeing with a Democrat regarding who should be elected president. At the other end we might find a Muslim claiming that there is one God, Allah, and that Muhammed is his pro-

phet, unable to convince a Hare Krishna to change the dance and chant. Both disputes may take place in the same neighborhood. This is the way life is today in urban America and Western Europe and even in the major cities around the world. Descriptive pluralism describes the situation in which we find ourselves.

The existence of these competing perspectives cannot be wished away. They belong indelibly to modern life. Sociologist Peter Berger defines pluralism as a form of secular consciousness in which the average person becomes confronted with a wide variety of reality-defining agencies.[4] As a form of consciousness, it becomes a part of us. Pluralism is more than just a swarm of differing opinions around us. It exists within us. George Forell says that "pluralism has become internalized, and the confrontation of the various reality-defining agencies takes place within us."[5] The result is that each of us as an individual may grant adherence to two or more otherwise incompatible visions of reality, and do so whether or not we are even aware of their incompatibility. As modern people we have no choice but to live this way.[6] The term 'descriptive pluralism' simply points out this fact. No Christian evangelization program ought to ignore it.

Yet, there is another understanding of pluralism. As with other words ending in '...ism', this term indicates a view of reality, a value system, an ideology, an ethical stance. I refer to this as *dogmatic pluralism* because it consists of a *positive affirmation of pluralism as a way of viewing reality and dictating conceptual and ethical commitments.*[7] It holds that variety and diversity are positive goods and that the denial of variety and diversity is bad. In its extreme form, dogmatic pluralism rejects the notion that there is anything that unites people across cultural or language lines.[8] Philosophically, radical pluralism so affirms the integrity of a given perspective that any attempt to change it is considered a moral violation. Hence, evangelization which intends to bring a person into a faith relationship to Jesus Christ is considered a violation of perspectival integrity.

Dogmatic pluralism in our own era is the twentieth century heir to eighteenth century liberalism and the doctrine of tolerance. Because of the intolerance of theological differences exhibited by Christian denominations during the confessional wars following the Reformation, the Enlightenment founders of the American republic sought a secular government which could maintain peace through toleration. In our own time many wish to go beyond a grudging tolerance to an open embrace of those who differ from us. What may be worth noting here is this: religious tolerance in the eighteenth century required the move to secular consciousness. One might want to ask whether contemporary dogmatic pluralism is itself an essentially religious perspective or just an apparently religious perspective that cloaks a secular commitment. We will not ask that here, though, because we will look at two other questions that reveal some problems with the idea of dogmatic pluralism.

First, can contemporary pluralism as a value system exist without commitment to a universal humanity? The way our Enlightenment forebears could hold the world together after sundering the primacy of religious

claims was to affirm the existence of a universal *humanum.* They posited the existence of a common human nature that exists in individuals regardless of the culture in which they live. This commitment was crucial for supporting other Enlightenment affirmations such as human dignity, natural rights, democracy, and religious liberty.

The radical turn in dogmatic pluralism has challenged this commitment, however, by making the group rather than the individual primary. Groups, i.e., cultural and linguistic groups, don't mix.[9] If one presses the logic of making an '...ism' out of cultural or religious integrity and developing an ethic that prohibits violating that integrity, then the principle of human unity evaporates. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz has raised the issue, noting how "the basic unity of mankind" becomes an empty phrase. He contends that once we affirm that the diversity of custom across time and over space is not a matter of mere garb or appearance but that humanity itself is various in its essence and expression, then the well-fastened moorings of philosophical humanism are loosed.[10] When our theologians get hold of this, they begin to deny the possibility of making universal claims. Donald Shriver writes, "By what right does anybody speak of the human—especially in a time when we are discovering the alienations and the destructive potentials of universal principles, including the principle of humanity?"[11]

What has happened is this: the observance that there are differences between cultures and reality-defining perspectives has led to the positing that these differences are ultimate. And, as ultimate, they are ethically inviolable. Yet we must ask: what is the warrant for making this move? The argument is certainly not based on any empirical evidence or social scientific research that shows people can or ought to be permanently divided along cultural or linguistic lines. It is strictly a speculative rejection of the commitment that made the eighteenth century idea of tolerance work.

It is my own conviction, in contrast, that if pluralism is to have any positive value for our thinking we must maintain a presuppositional commitment to the unity of the human race. Plurality makes sense only within the context of a universal unity to the human race. Without commitment to a universal *humanum* in some form, radical pluralism fails philosophically to give any good reason why we should honor someone else's opinion or conviction when it differs from our own. Only belief in some supra-perspectival or supra-cultural bond could warrant that. Such a belief must be an act of faith. In the eighteenth century it was faith in humanity's universal reason. What will it be in our time?

Our second question is this: Can commitment to dogmatic pluralism be reconciled with Christian evangelism? In asking this, we note how some contemporary pluralists posit the existence of something universal, but it is a divine rather than a human universal. Here we can cite theologians such as John Hick and Paul Knitter, whose position I have elsewhere referred to as 'supra-confessional universalism'.[12] I give it this name because its proponents advocate entering into inter-religious relationships by first abandoning any firm commitment to one's own con-

fessional stance and embracing a supra-confessional religious vision. John Hick begins by recommending Christian denial of the centrality and universality of Jesus Christ. He argues that the Chalcedonian two-natures Christology is a mistake. There is no warrant for positing that the strictly human Jesus is divine. Because Christians think of Jesus as divine, Hick argues, this has led to triumphalism and religious exclusivism. "Is not such an idea excessively parochial," writes Hick, "presenting God in effect as the tribal deity of the predominantly Christian West?"[13] What we need to do to pursue healthy relationships between Christians and non-Christians is to ask the Christian to remove Jesus Christ from his traditional position at the center of God's revelation and from his position in the Holy Trinity. Why? Because, he says, the ultimate reality upon which the faith of all believers in all religious traditions is the same.[14]

In the train of Ramakrishna of the nineteenth century, Hick sees all religious traditions as different paths up the same mountain. His image is that of the center. Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam are different paths to the same center. What's at the center? The Godhead, says Hick. Behind all the religions there is a single divine noumenon. It is mysterious and unfathomable yet it provides the informational input for each religious perspective.[15] Because this single divine input is interpreted by by the minds of each tradition in terms of its own categorical system of thought, the numinous reality becomes expressed in different modes of historically conditioned interpretation. The Christian religion exists as one of the many such historical modes of expression of this common divine reality. Thus, finally, Hick wants to see the confessional claims of Christianity considered as true for Christians in Western society, but he wants us to consider what Hindus and Buddhists believe to be true for them in the East. East shall remain East and West shall remain West. For a Christian to try to draw a Hindu or a Buddhist into the Christian perspective would evidently violate some invisible line that separates East from West. In sum, Christian evangelism is virtually precluded.

Why does Hick want Christians to deny the divinity and centrality of Jesus Christ? It shouldn't be necessary, considering Hick's own argument. If there is but one numinous reality and if each differing religious tradition has a valid perspective, then why is the Christian perspective singled out for reform? If the Christian perspective is true for the West, then why does Hick admonish Christians to give up on their central commitments? The argument seems to flounder on a *non sequitur*.[16]

Trinitarian Truth

If the dogmatic pluralists are right, why would anyone be motivated to engage in evangelization? If our situation is one in which a variety of religions sit side by side with partial perspectives on an illusive divine mystery, then why would a Christian want to share his or her perspective with others? Why would St. Paul endure shipwrecks and imprisonment when crossing cultural and language lines to spread the gospel? Why would the faithful in ancient Rome accept martyrdom just to deny

the lordship of Caesar while affirming that "Jesus is Lord"? Why would thousands of young people in the nineteenth century leave their European universities to travel to little known parts of the world to teach scripture and to plant churches? Why do Jewish-Christian evangelists representing Menorah Ministries in airport lobbies offer us tracts quoting John 3:16? I believe the answer is this: they are convinced the gospel they share is the truth.[17]

The truth by which the Christian faith stands is the claim that the very same God who has brought the cosmos into existence has entered our world in the person of Jesus Christ, that the death and resurrection of Jesus has wrought for us the forgiveness of sin and the promise of everlasting life, and that the Holy Spirit empowers us by making that crucified and risen Christ present to us moment by moment. Now, either this is true or it isn't. And if it is true, then its significance is unsurpassable. It is of ultimate significance. It is of universal significance. If it is not ultimate and universal, then it is not true. It cannot be the claim it is and be reduced to one perspectival truth sitting side by side with other parallel claims to ultimate and universal truth. The Christian claim cannot be trivialized and still be the Christian claim.

Note what this presupposes: both a single universal *humanum* as well as cultural and linguistic pluralism. The etiological story of Adam and Eve plus that of Noah and the flood, according to which the whole of the present human race shares a common ancestral origin, indicate the ancient Hebrew and Christian assumption that all human beings belong in the same divinely appointed category. Similary, the role played by the *imago dei* in Genesis 1:26-29 referring to all women and men, combined with the New Testament declaration that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the *imago dei,* the *eikon tou Theou,* unites all people in our vision of human fulfillment yet to be achieved in our eschatological resurrection with Christ. There is one God and, correspondingly, there is one human race. There is but one humanity regardless of what temporal, geographical, or cultural lines we might draw to separate groups from each other. On this assumption the Christian mission becomes supratribal. We remember that God promised Abraham that through his seed "all the families of the earth" will be blessed. We repeat with the prophet Isaiah that Israel is to become a "light to the nations." And we recall how St. Paul spoke so forcefully to St. Peter to make clear that Christ belongs to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. The gospel travels from language to language and culture to culture because God is one and there is but one human race.[18]

We need to acknowledge that descriptive pluralism is by no means new or unique to the post-Enlightenment world. It begins biblically with the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). The sense of human unity fades as the number of languages proliferates and communication becomes difficult. Yet it returns dramatically with the work of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost when the Galileans could be heard speaking in the various languages of the people present (Acts 2). Cultural and linguistic plurality was part of the very fabric of New Testament life. The book of Act reports St. Paul

and others straddling the line between Judaism and Hellenistic culture. Even in telling the story of Jesus, the Gospel accounts explain to the readers various Jewish customs. Why? Because the readers were undoubtedly living in a non-Jewish linguistic and cultural context. Jesus may have been born in Israel, but he died and rose for the world.

It is this scandal of particularity, so to speak, that seems to frighten dogmatic pluralists into withdrawing support for Christian evangelization. Yet the trinitarian claim is what it is. It relies upon the particularity of what happened in the history of Jesus at one time and one place. We affirm that the one God and creator of the entire world has entered that world. The infinite has become finite. The eternal has become temporal. The universal has become particular. The spiritual has become physical. The heavenly king has become an earthly servant. The source of all life has suffered death. The God of Israel has entered the world and, like all other things in the world, must occupy a single time and a single place. Hence, the Christian claim is not a metaphysical philosophy based upon common human experience. It is not a mystical insight gained from religious discipline. It is a historical event, and we can learn about it only if it is reported to us. Evangelization is defined as reporting this event, reporting it as good news. We are enabled to hear this report as good news for us, of course, because of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit who warms our hearts while opening our ears. Our transcendent God continues to work in our world, continues to work in the inner recesses of our own souls.[19]

The trinitarian claim that the one God has become incarnate in Christ and is now witnessed to in multiple languages also presupposes being tied to, and yet being loosed from, culture. The historical Jesus could not exist in cultural limbo. Like all human beings, his existence was contingent. He grew up as a Jew in a land and era we might call a multicultural crossroads. But the Gospel of Jesus by no means remains there. It travels from culture to culture, sometimes accomodating and sometimes transforming. "There can never be a culture-free gospel," writes Lesslie Newbigin; "yet the gospel, which is from the beginning to the end embodied in culturally conditioned forms, calls into question all cultures, including the one in which it was originally embodied."[20] In short, no culture is sacred. Only the God of the gospel is.

"We live in a pluralistic world," notes Donald McGavran; "yet Christians believe that pluralism in no way cancels the lordship of Christ."[21] Although acknowledging the obvious fact of descriptive pluralism, McGavran represents those who are impatient with a dogmatic pluralism, which he describes in terms of "the rapidly growing relativistic convictions that many roads lead to God and no one ought, therefore, to propagate his or her own brand of religion."[22] McGavran does not like to be told that no one has *The Truth.* Why? Because God has revealed the Godself in the Christ event. That is truth. So he puts forth his thesis with fervor.

The growth of the church and world evangelization depend

> on the conviction that the biblical revelation has been given by God and that, in the absolute matters concerning the human race and God, *God has revealed Himself and His perfect will authoritatively. Christians in this century or any other, this land or any other, may go forward confidently, knowing that they are basing their actions on unchanging truth.*[23]

There is strength in truth. The truth grasps us more than we grasp it. Once caught in the truth, we are reluctant give quarter to falsity. Once we have learned that two plus two equals four, we can no longer take seriously proposed answers such as three or five. Similarly, if we become convinced that "Jesus is Lord," it is difficult to admit that "Caesar is Lord," even if the death penalty is the price. This was the price paid by our Christian forebears during the Roman period. The combination of truth with lordship empowers us to resist the ultimate claims of lesser lords.

When it comes to confrontations with the claims of non-Christian religions, usually our lives are not at stake. Yet, we need to make decisions when the "Buddha of Light" is set side by side with Jesus, "the light of the world." There is no doubt that our horizon of understanding will be broadened as we learn more and more about the insights of the Buddhist tradition; no doubt that if we open ourselves to the pluralistic spirit within our own minds our lives will be enriched by what Buddhists say about Buddha. For these reasons we should listen. Yet this listening is no mandate for us to turn off the light of Christ. Witnessing to that light is mandated by the truth that it reveals.

Truth Without Tricks

What are the practical consequences for evangelizing of this understanding of the gospel as truth? One comes immediately to mind: no tricks! In other words, let the truth speak for itself. The Apostle Paul understood this well.

> We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God (II Cor.4:2).

Essential to this understanding of evangelization is the open statement of the truth as we have apprehended it from the scriptural witness. Openness and honesty are key. Manipulation or or confrontation or coercion add nothing to the truth of our message, nor to the effectiveness of our message. W. Charles Arn may be able to prove it. He distinguishes two types of evangelism: relational and confrontational. He then cites statistics. The relational or nonmanipulative approach to encouraging people to come to faith and to join the Christian church appears at first to be less effective. Confrontation and manipulation lead more people to make a verbal decision to join. But they do not stay long. They leave.

> . . .a confrontational or manipulative approach to evangelism actually results in a greater percentage of persons making a verbal commitment than does a relational approach. However, the dropout rate of such an approach is almost nine out of ten![24]

Truth has an intrinsic value and an intrinsic power to convince. If the strength of our commitment to evangelization emerges from our conviction of its truth, then our dispostion will be one of openly stating what we believe about God's revelation in Jesus Christ and then letting the Gospel message do the rest.[25]

Conclusion

What we have said here regarding truth-based evangelization in the face of dogmatic pluralism is expressed in parallel fashion by Lesslie Newbigin.

> . . .a Christian must welcome some measure of plurality but reject pluralism. We can and must welcome a plural society because it provides us with a wider range of experience and a wider diversity of human responses to experience, and therefore richer opportunities for testing the sufficiency of our faith. . . But we must reject the ideology of pluralism. We must reject the invitation to live in a society where everything is subjective and relative, a society which has abandoned the belief that truth can be known and has settled for a purely subjective view of truth—"truth for you" but not truth for all.[26]

Inherent in the claim of the gospel is the claim to ultimate truth. If ultimate truth be ultimate truth, then it must be more than simply truth-for-us. It must be truth-for-all. Such truth we do not possess in its entirety. It is not our private property. Our task is to witness to a truth that is bigger than we are, a truth that has come to us and grasped us. As witnesses, we point to it, not to ourselves. And when we point, we wants others to look. We want others to see what we see. We want others to open themselves to be grasped by the same gospel claim which has grasped us. The truth itself wants to be shared.

NOTES

[1]The present situation is sympathetically yet critically described by Carl Braaten. When confronted with inter-religious dialogue, we Christians are tempted to de-emphasize the "rock of offense" which is the central place that Jesus holds in God's history with the world. By looking for what the various religions hold in common, we try to salve the guilty conscience of Christians who want to repent of all the crimes committed against humanity in the name of Christ. We want to avoid "Christofascism." Yet, says Braaten, such Christ-less talk of God is empty of meaning, not true to the specific Christian belief in God and hope

for the world. "The Identity and Meaning of Jesus Christ," *Lutherans and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism,* edited by Frank W. Klos, C. Lynn Nakamura, and Daniel F. Martensen (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), p. 113.

[2]Bob Morley, in describing the lack of zeal for the evangel in the United Methodist Church, pines that we have lost the sense of *urgency*. "We believe or hope that God is going to find a way to save everybody," he writes; "We are universalists." As a replacement for evangelism, our churches now conceive of our mission as churching the unchurched. This loses power. He rewrites a familiar hymn to reflect our tepid substitute: "Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was unchurched but now I'm churched." "Confessions of a Naysayer," *The Christian Century,* 107:5 (February 7-14, 1990), p. 118.

[3]James A. Scherer defines evangelization as "the specific task of awakening or reawakening faith in Jesus Christ." Previously we thought of 'mission' as referring to overseas ministry and 'evangelism' as home ministry. But things are changing. "The task of specially trained and equipped cross-cultural missionaries now becomes evangelization in the regions beyond and the crossing of frontiers (however defined) to reach those who would not otherwise receive the witness of the gospel." *Gospel, Church, and Kingdom: Comparative Studies in World Mission Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), pp. 244-245.

[4]Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), p.127.

[5]George Forell, *The Proclamation of the Gospel in a Pluralistic World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), p.6.

[6]David Tracy considers the inescapable reality of pluralism to be a positive value that can enrich Christian theology, because the theologian can draw freely from non-Christian religious and secular perspectives when they can contribute to developing a more adequate understanding of reality. *Plurality and Ambiguity* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), pp. 110-112. The phenomenon of pluralism is already a factor that widens the Christian's understanding of reality, and this induces us to investigate other perspectives to widen it still. What this leaves unaddressed, however, is the question of originary truth.

[7]Elsewhere I have tried to delineate the characteristics of doctrinal or radical pluralism. See: "Pluralism as a Theological Problem," *The Christian Century,* 100:27 (September 28, 1983), pp. 843-845, and "Lutheran Distinctiveness in Mission to a Pluralistic World," *Dialog* 22:4 (Fall 1983), pp. 293-300.

[8]A good example is George Lindbeck, whose cultural-linguistic approach to theology denies any "single generic or universal experiential essence" to human religious sensibilities. Christianity becomes one cultural-linguistic tradition among many with no access to making truth-claims to people outside this tradition. *The Nature of Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), pp. 23, 64, 101.

[9]Historically, of course, this is absurd. Cultures and languages are undergoing constant change as they converge and merge. Yet, those who consider themselves pluralists in our era assume that lines can be drawn and cultures maintained as discreet entities.

[10]Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 36ff.

[11]Donald Shriver, "The Pain and Promise of Pluralism," *The Christian Century*, 97:11 (March 26, 1980), p. 346.

[12]See: "Confessional Universalism and Inter-Religious Dialogue," *Dialog* 25:2 (Summer 1986), pp. 226-31, and "A Christian Theology of Interreligious Dialogue," The Christian Century, 103:30 (October 15, 1986), pp. 883-885.

[13]John Hick, "Jesus and the World Religions," in *The Myth of God Incarnate* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), pp. 179ff; and in *God Has Many Names* (New York: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 73ff. Cf., Paul Knitter, *No Other Name?* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985). A more subtle and nuanced version of dogmatic pluralism can be found in the work of John Cobb, who wants pluralism without relativism. He affirms the "pluralistic spirit" of "tolerant openness" and rejects "intolerant closedness." Yet this does not lead to neutrality regarding all religious or value claims. Pluralism is not indifference or an equal reverence for all traditions. Pluralism is rather an openness to one's own convictions that leads to "creative transfor-

mation." *Christ in a Pluralistic Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), pp. 60, 204.

[14]Lesslie Newbigin uses the term 'ideology' to describe what we here call 'dogmatic pluralism'. One version is 'religious pluralism', which he describes as "the belief that the differences between the religions are not a matter of truth and falsehood, but of different perceptions of the one truth; that to speak of religious beliefs as true or false is inadmissible. Religious belief is a private matter." *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Geneva and Grand Rapids: WCC and Eerdmans, 1989), p.14. The root of the problem is the split in the West between value and fact plus our consignment of religion to the realm of value divorced from fact and, hence, divorced from truth.

[15]Though affirming a discreetness that draws lines between traditions, doctrinal pluralists differ on the question of the universality of the divine. Whereas Hick affirms a common supra-cultural and supra-linguistic divine reality which comes to expression in differing religious perspectives, Lindbeck denies it.

[16]Similarly, we might ask if Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach to Christianity has taken full cognizance of descriptive pluralism. The West is in the East, and the East is in the West. We already live together. Furthermore, pluralism is as much an inner-psychic phenomenon as it is a sociological phenomenon. There is no discreet cultural-linguistic tradition which we can confidently name 'Christian' and then separate it from other such traditions. Lindbeck's perpetual separatism is incompatible with descriptive pluralism.

[17]Paul Sponheim is convinced that the truth question is decisive. He argues that if the mutually exclusive claims of the competing religions are all true, then we Christians will have to give up our own claim to truth. Yet Sponheim is confident in the truth of the Christian Gospel, testing it against such criteria as coherence, correspondence, and future confirmation. "The Truth Will Make You Free," *Lutherans and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism,* pp. 139-173. It is in the truth-claim that we find the offense. "As long as the Church is content to offer its beliefs modestly as simply one of the many brands available in the ideological supermarket, no offense is taken. But the affirmation that the truth revealed in the gospel ought to govern public life is offensive." Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society,* p. 7.

[18]It is important to note that this unity is found in God and not the Christian church. "As a religion," writes Carl Braaten, "Christianity does not proclaim itself as the universal unity of humankind. However, the task of the Christian mission is to mediate the knowledge of a unity that God is in the process of creating through the proclamation of the gospel." *Lutherans and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism,* p. 116.

[19]The God of the historically contingent gospel is a trinitarian God. The notion of Godhead at the common center shared by all religions, according to John Hick, is much too abstract. In this one concept of the noumenon he must combine the quite incompatible claims for an active theism in Christianity along with Judaism and Islam, a passive theism as found in Hinduism, and even the passive non-theism in Buddhism. The Christian apprehension of the divine as trinitarian is our response to God's activity in the world. It cannot easily be reconciled with a simple monism or with passive divinity. In fact, argues Wolfhart Pannenberg, trinitarian theism better accounts for divine activity in the world than does non-trinitarian monotheism. See Pannenberg, "Problems of a Trinitarian God," *Dialog*, 26:4 (Fall 1987), pp. 256f.

[20]Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 4.

[21]Donald McGavran, "Religious Freedom and Theology of Mission," in *Contemporary Theologies of Mission,* edited by Arthur F. Glasser and Donald A. McGavran (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), p. 220.

[22]*Ibid.,* pp. 220f.

[23]*Ibid.,* p. 223, italics in original. McGavran makes me a bit nervous with words such as 'absolute' and 'unchanging'. If we take descriptive pluralism seriously, then we must admit that our own very thought processes have been heavily influenced by the relativism McGavran eschews This is inescapable. It is part and parcel of the post-Enlightenment mind we all share. We cannot return to the pre-modern era of absolutes without commiting a sacrifice

of the the intellect. To put it more positively, the trinitarian God revealed in Jesus Christ is a dynamic God. And our understanding of God will grow and change as new experiences open up broader horizons for understanding the original revelation. Such change should not frighten us. Our faith lies in God's faithfulness, not in divine unchangeability. With these qualifications in mind, I must say I appreciate McGavran's commitment to the Christian truth claim while acknowledging the pluralistic context in which that claim is put forth.

[24]W. Charles Arn, "Evangelism or Disciple Making?" in *Church Growth: State of the Art,* ed. by C. Peter Wagner, with Win Arn and Elmer Townes (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1986), p. 64; cited by Thomas H. McAlpine, "Truth, Method and Evangelism" *Journal of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education,* IV (1988-1989), p. 76.

[25]I do not by any means wish to pass over the significance of personal relationship in evangelism. I simply want to restrict this discussion to the ability of truth to stand on its own legs without support from manipulation or trickery.

[26]Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society,* pp. 243-244.

SELECTED PHENOMENA OF RELIGIOSITY: AN APPROACH FOR EVANGELISM TO THE SINGAPORE CHINESE

Chek Yat Phoon

In understanding the religiosity of the Chinese in Singapore, one has to be involved with Chinese rituals and cultural symbols. However, the system of religious and cultural symbols are themselves so elaborate that even the Chinese find it difficult fully to comprehend them. Furthermore, in many instances, culture and religion cannot be dichotomized. To be a religious Chinese is to be true to Chinese cultural roots and values (inclusive of religious and spiritual values). This makes the study of Chinese religiosity extremely complex and difficult. It is even more challenging to try to bridge the gap between Christian religiosity and Chinese religiosity.

This study attempts to recommend some avenues whereby Christian religiosity may be bridged with that of the Singapore Chinese. Due to the complexity of the task, the scope of the paper is delimited to a number of selected phenomena of Chinese religiosity in Singapore. Specifically, the following phenomena will be considered: Spiritual power and its effectiveness; respect and love of the ancient; pragmatism; corporateness; and belief in the supernatural. It is further delimited to the Chinese who subscribe to a set of syncretized religious beliefs, and does not include those of the orthodox religious faiths such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Christianity.

The Chinese Population in Singapore

According to the report by Tham,[1] approximately half of the 1,850,000 Chinese in Singapore regard themselves as Buddhists. However, this is a categorization of convenience rather than a declaration of any set of formal beliefs. Many, due to ignorance, equate Chinese religious beliefs with Buddhism. Tham presents the following breakdown of Chinese religious affiliation according to the census report of 1980: 34.3% are Buddhists; 38.2% are Taoists; 10.6% are Christians;[2] 0.1% are Muslims;

Chek Yat Phoon is Associate Professor of Theology and Chairman of the Theology Department at Southeast Asia Union College and Southeast Asia Adventist Seminary, Singapore.

0.1% are other religionists. However, if the Taoists and Buddhists were combined, it would appear that 72.5% of Chinese Singaporeans are Chinese religionists.[3]

Religious Beliefs of the Singapore Chinese

Even though Chinese religion in Singapore is composed of the above major religious adherences, the Chinese actually have a syncretized practice of folk beliefs (both of Chinese and Malay animistic origin), Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, basically of the Mahayana School. Worship at local shrines or saints' tombs are examples of such animistic beliefs, conceptualized as "Chinese folk-religion,"[4] or "Shenism."[5] Syncretized with Taoist beliefs and other folk-religions it makes Chinese religion difficult to define.[6] However, its emphasis on mysticism, its concern with celebrating the magical powers of earth, air and water, and its almost psychedelic polytheism, make it still attractive today, even though the Chinese in Singapore, in most cases, take their religious beliefs as a matter of convenience. They frequent temples or shrines when there is a felt need, when assistance of a deity is sought. Even festive celebrations which normally require a religious practice elicit a wide range of responses.

Taoism

Although Taoism may not be numerically dominant, its influence on Shenism is very strong at all levels.[7]

The most influential aspect of this is ancestral worship. These deified ancestors are not in the same category as gods.[8] For example, there is the "kitchen god" who is the supernatural inspector of the household, sent by the Jade Emperor of Heaven. His duty is to watch the daily goings-on of the house and to compile a report for his supervisor at the end of each year. The fortunes of the household for the coming year will be decided on the basis of the report.[9] However, while deified ancestors do keep watch over the household, they are not viceroys of the Jade Emperor. They do so on their own accord.

Ancestors must be respected. Offerings, libations, incense and other kinds of sacrifices must be given them so that they, too, will bless the household. Blessing is represented by their personal involvement from the underworld or an "intermediate existence" in the affairs of the household. Therefore, the blessings obtained are different from those of the "kitchen god." This belief in the spirit world permeates the whole set of Chinese beliefs. It is therefore not surprising that Hinayana Buddhism, with its concepts of Nirvana, or the extinction of the soul, is not a major school of belief in Singapore.[10]

The Chinese spirit world also includes the belief that there is a divination of things animate or inanimate, and belief in ghosts as a form of spirit. These ghosts and/or spirits are divided into two types: those who are benevolent to the living and those who have the potential to do harm to

the living. The former are usually other heavenly deities or the spirits of deceased relatives who have been deified. The latter are those who have died violently and not found a place of rest. They are neither in hell nor in any abode of rest. Normally they would not be related to any one's family. They are believed to guard or inhabit certain areas or locations, either in a tree or any dark alley. Therefore, if they are not appeased through some form of sacrifice, they will perform harm to the living.

Ancestral veneration has been well researched.[11] One of the rites associated with this is Qing Ming. It is celebrated by the Chinese at the end of the second or at the beginning of the third month of the lunar calendar in commemoration of the ancestors. Chinese families visit the tombs of their ancestors with offerings of food and joss sticks. The food is usually taken home after "presenting" it to the dead, and the whole family enjoys a meal together. It has been advocated by some to have no religious significance, while others have observed marked religious manifestations related to the worship of spirits.[12] Chao, for example, has said:

> Ancestral veneration (worship) must be considered a cultural custom, not a religious act (or idolatry). . . The Chinese themselves do not consider this as a religious act, nor should Christians and missionaries. It is basically a veneration of the dead as they would venerate any living person by way of bowing or respect. This is embedded in Chinese history—called *hsiao* or filial peity, respecting the past and honoring the living family members, especially the parents.[13]

By contrast, Daniel Chua has stated that:

> . . .The teachings of the Bible are clearly opposed to the Chinese view of the fate of their dead, their desire to communicate with the dead, their inclination to worship their dead, as well as their obligation to sacrifice to the dead.
>
> The ancestral cult, besides having religious functions, also performs very important social functions for the Chinese. To complicate matters, it is so integrally knitted with Chinese culture that the traditional evangelical response to outrightly condemn it as idolatrous has not argued well. . .
>
> The crux of our contextualized approach lies in three important considerations. First, where the ancestral rites are only cultural in nature, they should be accepted as much as possible. Second, where the rites are neutral, they should be redeemed where possible. Third, where the rites are inherently religious, they must be rejected with the additional consideration of providing functional substitutes for their social function where it is legitimate.[14]

Closely associated with ancestor veneration and the spirit world beliefs is the practice of "geomancy," called by the Chinese, "feng shui." This

is the belief that the position of the house, or the direction of the tombstone of ancestors will inevitably alter the fortunes of the family.[15] It is even widely accepted among some Chinese Christians. Therefore, along with this practice, they actively engage in ancestor worship because they can manipulate their ancestors to their advantage, thereby determining the fate of the individual.[16]

In addition, the Chinese believe that the choice of a right name can help to avoid disaster. For this reason, boys are sometimes given names of girls, and vice-versa. On occasion, even the names of animals are given to children, most commonly: "Ah Kow" (dog), "Ah Gu" (cow), or "Ah Tu" (pig). Another way to earn more blessings or to have divine protection is to have a fictitious relationship with a lucky person or a benevolent deity.[17] The Cantonese called this "khay" and it is equivalent to the Western concept of "god-parenting."

However, the most outstanding deity worshipped by the Chinese community in Singapore is the Boddhisattva Kuan Yin (Goddess of Mercy), whose icons are not only found in almost all temples but also in homes. This deity is a major reason why half of the Chinese in Singapore claim that they are Buddhists, because she is recognized as another reincarnation of Buddha. These concepts emanate from the Mahayana School rather than the Hinayana School.

Confucianism

The link between the spirit world, the living, and spirituality, also find their interplay in Confucian practices. This too is most evident in ancestor worship. The Taoist-Shenist beliefs provide the mystical elements, whilst Confucian beliefs provide the ethics and values.

Confucianism is a pragmatic belief. Although orthodox Confucianists do not claim that Confucianism is a religion, but rather a philosophy, the worship of Confucius is practiced in Singapore, though only in a limited way. Even on some festive occasions, some school teachers in Chinese-medium schools celebrate by offering sacrifices to the icons of Confucius.

Confucius was basically a humanist. The four cardinal virtues he taught, and further elaborated by Mencius, his disciple, are: Benevolence (ren), duty (yi), rite (li), and wisdom (zhi).[18] The believers of Confucian doctrines live in the here and now, without transcendental aspirations, guilt, or hope of salvation after death.[19] However, the love and honor for the past and the ancient (i.e. history) are just as important. From the *Anecdotes* of Confucius, we read:

> On the walls of the Hall of Light were paintings of the ancient sovereigns from Yao and Shun downwards their characters appearing in the representations of them, and words of praise or warnings being appended. There was also a picture of the Duke of Chau sitting with his infant nephew, the King Chang, upon his knees, to give audience to all the princes. Confucius surveyed the scene with silent delight, and then said

> to his followers, "Here you see how Chau became so great. As we use a glass to examine the forms of things, so must we study antiquity in order to understand the present time.[20]

Because of this love for antiquity, ancestor worship is advocated by Confucianists and is, therefore, incorporated into Taoist-Shenist practices. Orthodox Confucianists do not believe in the metaphysical occurrences as Taoist-Shenists do. Ancestor worship is performed as an expression of filial piety and not as a bargain for blessings.[21] Confucius says:

> When parents are alive, serve them according to the rule of propriety. When they die, bury them according to the rules of propriety and sacrifice to them according to the rule of propriety.

Although Taoism-Shenism and Confucianism stem from different interests, aims, methods and general systems, their amalgamation in the belief system holds the Chinese cultural values together.

Modernization and Religiosity

While driving or walking through Singapore, one cannot help but notice the religious nature of the Chinese people. Magnificent temples tower elegantly in the housing estates, and little red altars with joss sticks and offerings of fruits and flowers grace the outside of the houses of the Chinese. This form of religiosity is prevalent in Chinese culture everywhere, and Singapore is no exception.

Although the majority of the Singaporeans indicate that they belong to one form of religious belief or another, in reality they adhere to certain forms of syncretized religious practices. Religion is seldom practiced with fanatical zeal. Rather, the opposite is true—religious practice is more of a convenience. If it relates to their economical prosperity, it will be practised more fervently; if the adverse is true, it will be attributed to fate, and the devotion to deities will be shifted.

On the whole, the pursuit of religion is largely connected with their pursuit of modernization or economic advancement. In fact, science and technology are given more attention than icons at home or in the temples in many cases. It is in relation to this pursuit that certain temples or deities have more worshipers and devotees than others because the deities are thought to be more powerful and effective ("laing" in Chinese) in fulfilling their requests.

Evangelism and Symbols of Religious Phenomena

The traditional values and ethics which are related to the religiosity of Chinese in the past are fundamentally the same as those of the present-

day Singaporean Chinese. Tham says that even the non-religious Singaporean Chinese are nevertheless mindful of the power and effects that "symbols may have on their work and everyday life."[24] For example, the pursuit for wealth or economic stability in modern Singaporean continues to be sought with fervor. This is, perhaps, the reason that Chinese everywhere are known for their hard-working attitudes. Tham continues:

> Having male children or maintaining progeny as a means of keeping the lineage alive, . . . remains to be a major motivation despite structural changes in the economy. This constitutes a major factor that has maintained the status of certain rituals among Chinese Singaporeans. Longevity as a value-objective, as in the case of having male children, remains ambient in Chinese cultural life in Singapore. Wealth, progeny, happiness, and longevity are therefore potent in shaping ritual behavior [religiosity] among Chinese Singaporeans. Such value-objectives are suggested or expressed by a system of elaborate symbols.[25]

In spite of the complexity and elaborate symbols that exist in the Chinese religious behavior, many symbols seem to have residence in the collective unconscious, awaiting to blossom at the touch of experiences and existential demands. The following religious phenomena based upon the "system of elaborate symbols" of the Singapore Chinese can be inferred, therefore, as having importance for the practice of evangelism in the context.

Spiritual power and its effectiveness

Power and spiritual effectiveness can be seen from the Chinese pursuit for economic stability and wealth. In general, humankind might pursue such an enterprise; however the Chinese do so through their religious behavior. They seek temple or shrine deities to fulfill this aspect of their felt needs. These temple or shrine deities are symbols of power and effectiveness ("laing") for them. Their religiosity is proportional to the power and effectiveness manifested by these deities. This, in turn, is proportional to the economic stability and wealth acquired. This does not mean that the richer the person, the more religious he or she is, but rather the idea of the possibility of getting rich through dedication to the deities leads the Chinese to be religious and devoted to these "gods."

In order to bridge the Christian message with the phenomenon of spiritual power and its effectiveness of the Singaporean Chinese, the spiritual life of an individual or a community should manifest a change due to the power and motivation of a divine power manifested by the Christian God, Jesus Christ. Such changes cannot and should not be shown by any human manipulation. In other words, any attempt to explain the phenomena through a scientific or psychological approach will be ineffective.

The power of Jesus and the manifestation of his Holy Spirit in individual

lives and the human community should be shown to have brought greater change in the total aspect of living than worship of deities. Through such a process, the religiosity of the Singaporean Chinese can be transferred to belief in the Christian God. The increase of the Christian population in Singapore recently from 10.6% in 1980 to 19% in 1988 can be attributed largely to the charismatic Christian communities which emphasize "preaching, healing and deliverance" by the power of the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ.

Respect and Love of the Ancient

The filial piety, progeny, ancestor worship and longevity of Confucius are some of the phenomena for respect and love of the ancient. As discussed earlier, Confucius' influence in this aspect is still prevalent. With the re-emphasis of Confucian ethics in moral education since 1982 in Singapore[26] and ancestor worship which has its equivalent in the Catholic practice of All Souls' Day, this phenomenon is very much alive and has most likely grown in popularity.[27]

In bridging this phenomenon, Christianity should be taught from the Old Testament as well as from the New. Jesus Christ must be seen as the God of the whole of Creation and not only as God of the Christian Church. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is also the God of Adam and Eve. The love for antiquity can be illustrated vividly if this procedure is followed. In other words, Christianity is older than many ancient religious beliefs if it can be shown that the temple structures and the concepts of shrines parallel those in the Old Testament. Without being too mystical, this can draw attention to the bible as an ancient book, with a definite affinity to the Chinese belief system.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism does not stem from that of Confucian ethics or beliefs, but rather the Chinese concern for the here and now and the influence of modernization. As mentioned earlier, to many Chinese, religious practices are often motivated by felt needs and conveniences more than a conviction of the reality of the religious symbols. This is authenticated by their sporadic visits to temples and shrines.

In bridging this phenomenon, Christianity should be presented as relevant for the needs of today. What this involves is that Christian organizational projects ought to result in "lifting" the socio-economic status of the Chinese people. The concept that "the poor find it easier to reach God's Kingdom that the rich" may have adverse effects on the Chinese, who may also view as a truism that "the God of Heaven will bless and not curse." On the other hand, by working with their belief in "fate" and "feng shui," which assists them in accepting the adversity of life, the Christian gospel can penetrate this concept with the Christ of the bible, who can

alter "fate," and who has the power to counteract adversities brought about by "feng shui." Besides, if "feng shui" can be explained in a more scientific and technological manner, it might help them to break away from fear of the unknown that the mystical nature of "feng shui" brings.

Corporateness

Evangelism among the Singapore Chinese must also take into account their practice of vicarious representation. In other words, one member of the family can represent the whole family to worship in the temple or at the shrine of the deity in the house to bring about blessings for all. This "ex opere operato" concept results in a corporate religiosity rather than the individual form of religious conviction which Christianity apparently teaches.

The family approach to evangelism might therefore be more effective. In fact, Christianity has often been perceived as an adverse element that splits up families, and as one of the colonial approaches that the Chinese in time past have tolerated and have interjected into their own system. It is no wonder that Christianity is frequently viewed as a foreign religion and not as another manifestation of the divine. However, if the elders or head of the household were to be approached first, and then they themselves were to assume the initiative to lead the entire household in accepting the gospel, such prejudice against Christianity might be broken down.

In conjunction with this, having the young to share and teach the elderly the gospel may bring unfavorable results. It is true that the gospel of love will break down prejudice, but the deep sense of filial respect and love for antiquity indicates that the elderly often take the words of the young very lightly. Hinton suggests that utilizing the concept of "kinship network," (that is, the "use of Chinese homes and networks of relatives"), has resulted in fruitful endeavors in some churches in Singapore.[28] It might be in this context that the younger people might help in evangelizing older relatives. Even then, within such networks, older adults should be present.

Belief in the Supernatural

Beliefs of Singapore Chinese in the spirit world, longevity, ancestor worship and divination of animate and inanimate objects likewise provide powerful symbolism, resulting in a deep sense of superstition. However, belief in the supernatural should not be seen as mere superstition in the bridging of Christian religiosity with the religiosity of the Singaporean Chinese.

For example, the presentation of the divine hosts can be compared to Chinese belief in the spirit world. The Chinese communicator can say: "If there are bad spirits, there must be good spirits. The bible teaches about the good spirits (the angels) and the chief of these is Gabriel. The bad spirits are the devils. The bible also teaches this: For every one bad spirit, there are two good spirits because only one-third of angels turned bad and

became devils."[29] The evangelist can then show from the bible the different miracles performed by Jesus, the head of all these angels. Likewise the bible can show what has been accomplished by those who believed in Jesus, contrasted with the false prophets, who were possessed by the bad spirits. At the conclusion of the presentation, it could be stressed that miracles are performed due to needs rather than performed at random. This might help to contrast Christianity with their belief in the deities who often act according to their whims and fancies or out of spite rather than of reason, and might also appeal to the Chinese traditional value of wisdom (zhi).

Conclusion

The task of bridging the above religious phenomena with the Christian message for the purpose of effective evangelism is most difficult. However, the symbolism of Chinese religiosity can be viewed in a very positive way if the context of the Chinese in Singapore is taken seriously. Indeed, it can even have a redemptive role. For example, we have Keith W. Hinton's suggestion that the whole church could be involved during the Qing Ming Festival as a commemoration of Easter even though the date may not coincide with the usual Easter celebration.[30]

Furthermore, symbols are dynamic entities in human beings. Humankind cannot live without symbols; but with them, life becomes more complex because the meanings and representations are not static. Therefore, the understanding and the attempt to communicate the understanding become even more demanding. However, if the Christian gospel is to be preached to all the world, then further thought and analysis must continue to identify symbolic representation with attempts to bridge Chinese symbolism with the symbolism inherent in the Christian message.

NOTES

[1]Chee Seong Tham, *Religion and Modernization: A Study of Changing Rituals Among Singapore's Chinese, Malays and Indians* (Singapore: Graham Brash, 1985), p. 6.

[2]The number of Christians has increased to about 12.4% in 1986 and 19% in 1988. (Kuan Yew Lee, "The Challenge and Pitfalls," *The Straits Times*, August 17, 1987, p. 17; and Shoong Tat Cheng, "PM: Why S'pore is not Westernized," *The Straits Times*, February 6, 1989, p. 1.)

[3]Chee Seong Tham, *Modernization*, p. 6.

[4]C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of the Historical Factors* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1961), pp. 11ff.

[5]M. Topley, "Chinese Religion and Religious Institutions in Singapore," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society 29, 1* (May, 1956), pp. 70-118.

[6]A. P. Wolf, *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society* (Stanford, CA: Standford University Press, 1974), p. 309.

[7]Gorabedian and Coombs observe that one in eleven Chinese is a professed Taoist. J. H. Gorabedian & O. Coombs, *Eastern Religions in the Electric Age* (New York, Gosset & Dunlap

Workman Pub. Co., 1969), p. 99

[8]M. C. Yang, *A Chinese Village: Taitou, Shantung Province* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1948), p. 99.

[9]H. T. Fei, *Peasant Life in China: A Field Study of Country Life in the Yangtze Valley* (New York: E. P. Dutten Co,. 1939), p. 90.

[10]Chee Seong Tham, *Modernization,* p. 8.

[11]Nigel Lester Ransom, "Death and Afterlife in Biblical and Chinese Religious Thought." Th.M. thesis, South East Asia Graduate School of Theology, Singapore, 1983; Henry N. Smith, "Chinese Ancestor Practices and Christianity: Toward a Viable Contextualization of Christian Ethics in a Hong Kong Setting." Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, 1987; Vivienne Wee, "Religion and Ritual among the Chinese of Singapore." M.A. thesis, National University of Singapore, 1977; Fong Yang Wong, "An Exegetical Study of 1 Cor. 8:1-11:1. On Food Offered to Idols with Applications to Asian Chinese Christians." M.Div. thesis, The School of Graduate Studies, Singapore Bible College, 1987; and Daniel Meng Wah Chua, "A Biblical Evaluation of Some Fundamental Beliefs Underlying the Chinese Ancestral Cult, with Suggestions Towards a Contextualized Christian Response." M.Div. thesis, The School of Graduate Studies, Singapore Bible College, 1988.

[12]In an interview by the reporters of *The Straits Times* with Professor Teh Yao Wu, director of the Institute of East Asian Philosophies, who is also an elder of the Presbyterian Church, it is reported that he sees nothing religious about Qing Ming and he himself practiced it yearly ("Qing Ming Rites 'are not Religious in Nature'." *The Straits Times*, April 3, 1989).

[13]Samual H. Chao, "Confucian Chinese and The Gospel: Methodological Consideration," *Asia Journal of Theology,* Vol. 1:1 (1987), p. 24.

[14]Daniel Meng Wah Chua, *"Biblical Evaluation,"* pp. 128-129.

[15]J. D. Young, "Regarding 'The Chinese Religious Sense'," *Ching Feng, XIII, 3,* (Hong Kong: Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, 1979), p. 152.

[17]A. P. Wolf, *Religion and Ritual,* p. 222.

[18]Martin Lu, *Confucianism: Its Relevance to Modern Society* (Singapore: Federal Pub., 1983), pp. 10-20.

[19]Gorabedian and Coombs, *Eastern Religions,* p. 98.

[20]J. Legge (trans.), *Confucius: Confucius Analects, the Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean* (New York: Dover Pub., Inc., 1971), p. 66.

[21]W. T. Chan, et. al. (Compilers), *The Great Asian Religions: Anthology* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1969), p. 106.

[22]J. Legge, *Confucius,* p. 147.

[23]C. F. Potter, *The Great Religious Leaders* (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1962), p. 155.

[24]Chee Seong Tham, *Modernization*, p. 10. For the importance of symbol in human religious understanding, see F. Demetrio, SJ, "Symbol in Comparative Religion and the Georgics," *Logov 3*. Quezon City, Philippines: Loyala House of Studies, Ateneo de Manila University, 1968, and Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row), 1957.

[25]*Ibid.*

[26]Martin Lu, *Confucianism*, pp. 71ff.

[27]This is using Tillich's words, in *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 43.

[28]Keith W. Hinton, "In Singapore, Christian Witness Through Kinship Networks," *Together*, July-September, 1985, pp. 27-28.

[29]See Revelation 12:7-12, 3, 4.

[30]Quoted by Daniel Meng Hwa Chua, *"Biblical Evaluation,"* pp. 131-135.

ECUMENICAL DIRECTIONS IN EVANGELISM: MELBOURNE TO SAN ANTONIO

Norman E. Thomas

"YOUR WILL BE DONE—MISSION IN CHRIST'S WAY" was the theme of the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism at San Antonio, Texas, 22-31 May 1989, sponsored by the World Council of Churches. The 700 participants from more than 100 countries in their official "Message" spoke about "shared signs of hope and renewal" in which they hear from the living God "a new call to faith, and see a new challenge for mission and evangelism."[1]

San Antonio was the tenth in that series of world missionary conferences begun in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910. The first five after Edinburgh (Jerusalem 1928, Tambaram, near Madras 1938, Whitby, Canada 1947, Willingen, Germany 1952, and Achimota, Ghana 1958) were organized by the International Missionary Council (IMC). When it merged with the World Council of Churches in 1961 the tradition continued under the auspices of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) in Mexico City 1963, Bangkok 1973, and Melbourne, Australia 1980.

Official voting delegates were to represent the WCC member churches (in contrast to Lausanne II, a conference of interested individual Christians). The quotas provided that 15% be youth, 50% be women (actually 44% in attendance), 20% be from Orthodox churches, and 70% from churches outside Europe and North America. The latter included an official 8-member delegation from the China Christian Council—their first participation in such a conference since 1952. Others attended as consultants, observers, and press representatives. They included a 48-member Roman Catholic contingent, with 21 officially appointed by the Vatican. Official observers from the World Evangelical Fellowship swelled the ranks of evangelicals present. For the very first time five representatives of other religions attended as consultants and addressed the Conference on interfaith issues. The *Encuentro,* a five-day encounter for 500 North Americans, paralleled the opening sessions of the main conference to introduce WCC issues to a wider constituency. As a result San Antonio

---

Norman E. Thomas is the Vera B. Blinn Professor of World Christianity at United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio.

became the most widely representative ecumenical conference of this century.

As at Melbourne, this was an open-ended meeting providing numerous opportunities for dialogue both in small group sessions for Bible study and discussion of issues, and in the plenaries. Formal speeches were kept to a minimum; no resolutions were drafted in advance. Instead the consensus, both on the "Message" from San Antonio and on "Acts in Faithfulness" to "Mission in Christ's Way" were to arise from the "grassroots" discussions at the Conference. The longer reports from sections were presented to the Conference for response but not formally adopted.

What was the saliency of evangelism at San Antonio, in comparison to earlier WCC conferences on world mission and evangelism? What theology of evangelism was presented? What was the relation of mission to evangelism? How was witness understood in relation to secular society and peoples of other faiths? What did San Antonio contribute to the dialogue between conciliar and evangelical Protestants concerning evangelism? These are the central questions to be addressed in this report.

Holistic Evangelism

"Will Uppsala betray the two billion?" Donald McGavran asked in 1968 on the eve of the WCC Assembly. He charged that the World Council had given up concern for the two billion who had neither heard of Jesus Christ nor had any real chance to believe in him as Lord and Savior.[2]

Philip Potter, CWME Secretary for the WCC, addressed similar issues as in 1967 he asked the Central Committee: "Is evangelism at the heart of the life and work of the WCC? What does the WCC mean when it speaks of evangelism? What is to be done to manifest more evidently the central concern of the WCC and its member churches for evangelism?"[3]

The World Council of Churches inherited a legacy of evangelism as a primary ecumenical concern. The focus of the church's mission during the first three decades of this century, David Bosch declares, was on *evangelism.* Thereafter from Tambaram (1938) to New Delhi (1961) the *church* was the primary focus.[4] The Constitution of the WCC since its founding in 1948 had included the function and purpose "to support the churches in their worldwide missionary and evangelistic task."[5] A Secretariat for Evangelism was set up in 1949. After New Delhi, however, the *world* was emphasized increasingly as the primary focus of God's concern, with salvation understood as including both personal and social liberation.

At the WCC's 5th Assembly in Nairobi (1975), however, evangelism regained its central place, implicitly in section I on "Confessing Christ Today" and explicitly in Bishop Mortimer Arias' plenary address on evangelism entitled "That the World May Believe." Arias identified evangelism as an "essential", "primary", "normal", "permanent", and "costly" task of the church. In response John Stott, an Anglican delegate who may be regarded as architect of the Lausanne Covenant (1974), argued

that the WCC needed to recover: (1) a recognition of the lostness of humanity; (2) confidence in the gospel; (3) conviction about the uniqueness of Christ; (4) a sense of urgency about evangelism; and (5) a personal experience of Jesus Christ. In the public discussion Bishop Arias was quite happy with Stott's last four points, only preferring to proceed from the love of God rather than from the lostness of humanity.[6]

A high water mark for the WCC in developing a holistic understanding of evangelism came in 1982 as the Central Committee adopted *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* (hereafter cited as *ME*). In it the WCC affirmed and continued the trend initiated at Nairobi, with the conviction that there is a close and inextricable relationship "between Christian unity and missionary calling, between ecumenism and evangelization." The document quotes Philip Potter's dictum that "Evangelization is the test of our ecumenical vocation." The section entitled "Conversion" contains the ecumenical conviction that "the proclamation of the Gospel includes an invitation to recognize and accept in a personal decision the saving lordship of Christ." Conversion, however, "incorporates the totality of our life, because God's love is concerned with that totality." Because we live in community "the call to conversion, as a call to repentance and obedience, should also be addressed to nations, groups and families. Our evangelistic witness includes the proclamation of the lordship of Christ to all realms of life."[7] The San Antonio Conference as an Act in Faithfulness challenged the churches "to make *ME* our own and give expression to the holistic understanding of mission reflected in it" (Sect. 1).

Theocentric Evangelism

A second major evangelism theme at San Antonio was the articulation of a theocentric theology of evangelism. It began with the Conference theme, "Thy Will Be Done: Mission in Christ's Way." "Not only the so-called spiritual but also the whole physical universe moves in the sphere of God's will," Bishop Anastasios of Androussa, Moderator of the WCC's CWME, declared in his keynote address. He continued:

> The whole world, not only humankind but the entire universe, has been called to share in the restoration that was accomplished by the redeeming work of Christ....The transforming of creation, as victory over the disfigurement that sin brought to the world, is to be found in the wider perspective and immediate concerns of Christian mission.[8]

Section I was entitled "Turning to the Living God." Quoting from *ME* that "Christians seek to discern the unsearchable riches of God and the way he deals with humanity" (42), the report reaffirms the "evangelistic mandate" of the ecumenical movement but emphasizes "that we may never claim to have a full understanding of God's truth; we are only the recipients of God's grace." The implications drawn for witness among

people of other living faiths will be discussed below. But the urgency for evangelism that John Stott sought for in 1975 is no longer lacking:

> The love of God for the world is the source for our missionary motivation and this love creates an urgency to share the Gospel invitingly in our time (Sect. 1:8b).

Likewise concerning Christ as Savior there was no compromise on the historic Christian affirmations. The report includes wording from the important 1988 Tambaram (Madras, India) consultation on dialogue and mission that Christians desire to "confess the life and work of Jesus Christ as unique, decisive, and universally significant." There follows a reaffirmation of the CWME's aim, as endorsed by the 1975 Nairobi Assembly, that the Christian community should be assisted to proclaim "the Gospel of Jesus Christ, by word and deed, to the whole world to the end that all may believe in him and be saved" (I:8b).

A Trinitarian theology of evangelism is completed at San Antonio in the Section I report on "Communicating the Gospel Today." The language closely parallels that from a consultation of Orthodox theologians on "The Evangelistic Witness of Orthodoxy Today."[9] Christ's mission to the world "manifests the outpouring of God's love through the Son and the Spirit." This combines ministries of love and unity, witness and service:

> In the image of the Trinity, we must hold together this witness of the worshipping and serving community united in love, with that of its evangelistic task of sending forth persons to proclaim the word to those who have not yet heard or realized its fulfilling and saving grace (I:40).

Witness in a Secular Society

A third theme concerned witness in a secular society. The Section I report on that theme begins by quoting *ME*:

> Everywhere the churches are in missionary situations. Even in countries where the churches have been active for centuries we see life organized today without reference to Christian values, a growth of secularism understood as the absence of any final meaning. The churches have lost vital contact with the workers and the youth and many others. The situation is so urgent that it demands priority attention of the ecumenical movement (*ME*, 37, I:17).

Bishop Anastasios in his address picked up the concept of witness in six continents which had been a WCC emphasis since Mexico City as he declared:

> Distinctions between Christian and non-Christian nations are

> no longer absolutely valid in our days. In all nations there is a need for re-evangelization in every generation. Every local church finds itself in mission in its actual geographical and cultural territory and context.[10]

From its inception in 1948 the WCC had been concerned about "the baffling problem of communicating with the unchurched."[11] At San Antonio Bishop Lesslie Newbigin provided the charisma of historic continuity on this issue. Former bishop of the Church of South India, Secretary of the International Missionary Council when it integrated in 1961 to become the WCC/CWME, and theological lecturer, Newbigin provided a depth of historical insight as he spoke to more than three hundred in an impromptu evening session. In recent years he has focused his writings on this issue.

Newbigin repeated the analysis written in *Foolishness to the Greeks* (1986) and his article "Can the West be Converted?" (1987). He argues that modern Western culture includes a dichotomy between a private world of values where pluralism reigns and a public world of what our culture calls "facts".[12] For Christians to accept this analysis relegates Christianity to the status of just one among the possible "private options available" of value systems. Instead Newbigin proposes that Christians refuse to have religion confined to a private sphere of values and feelings. Instead, "we shall have to be bold enough to confront our public world with the reality of Jesus Christ"—a fact of history, calling for a conversion "not only of the heart and the will but also of the mind."[13]

Newbigin's cultural analysis was taken up in the Section I report in these words:

> Secularism . . . has infiltrated and profoundly influenced our churches . . . they have also themselves contributed to the spread of secularism. Some results of this have been the compartmentalization of life into 'public' and 'private' spheres and the relegation of 'religion' to the latter. . . . Specifically in our witness we have often absorbed the dichotomy between spiritual and social, and word and action, resulting in a distortion of the biblical concern for witness to persons in the totality of their need (I:21).

The antidote recommended at San Antonio is that the church in a secular society break out from its ghetto existence. To do so involves a "witness of life" by the whole people of God—clergy and laity, women and men. It will be a witness in deed as much as in word, recapturing the spirit and practice of the ascetic tradition. For some it will involve a simple life in which sharing and solidarity take priority over individualism and possession. For others it will involve boldness in the public sphere in refusing to conform to the pattern of this world (I:23-24). The result is a clear option for a "Christ transforming culture" theology—rejecting both the "Christ of culture" and the "Christ against culture"

options of the now-classic typology of H. Richard Niebuhr.[14]

The San Antonio statement concludes with the recognition that the issue of witness within secular cultures needs further study by the WCC. The Conference adopted an Act of Faithfulness recommending that churches around the world launch projects similar to that on "Missionary Congregations in a Secularized Europe", with special attention to children and youth, and the Christian ascetic tradition "as a means of witnessing to the gospel in the context of the secular society" (I:2(i)).

Witness Among People of Other Living Faiths

A fourth theme related to evangelism concerned witnessing among people of other faiths. Documents from San Antonio on this theme break new and creative ground, yet are open to varied interpretations.

Paul Knitter, in his analysis of WCC developments in this area, argues that since New Delhi (1961) the World Council of Churches has "clearly broken with the previous negative, exclusivistic attitude toward other religions that, under the influence of Barth and Kraemer, had prevailed since the Tambaram Missionary Conference in 1938." The theological foundations for such dialogue, however, "have become more controversial and blurred."[15] Knitter, in his typology of Christian attitudes towards religious pluralism, places the WCC in a different position from that of Stanley Samartha, the former director of its Dialogue sub-unit.[16]

On the one hand, the WCC at its Nairobi (1975) assembly reaffirmed that the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations and baptize them "should not be abandoned or betrayed, disobeyed or compromised."[17] Opinions differed as to whether Jesus Christ is at work among people of other faiths. Recognizing that the Spirit works outside the church, and that people of various faiths "have been faced with the person and teaching of Jesus Christ," it was acknowledged that Christ's work is not confined to the limits of the church.[18] These two affirmations were repeated in *ME* (1983): "Christians owe the message of God's salvation in Jesus Christ to every person and to every people", but also "the Spirit of God is constantly at work in ways that pass human understanding. . . the Word is at work in every human life" (Par. 41-43).

On the other hand, both Stanley Samartha and Wesley Ariarajah, his successor, have questioned the absolute finality and universal normativity of Christ. Samartha argues that before the total mystery of God, "no religious figure or religion can call itself the final and full word."[19] Ariarajah finds in the absolute claims that some Christians make for Christ "the greatest single hindrance to genuine witness." He advocates a theocentric theology with a "re-emphasis on the Spirit of God as the One who...will open up many possibilities for relationship with people of other faiths."[20]

Faced with such divergent outlooks, the WCC has been content to prepare useful *Guidelines on Dialogue*[21] without insisting on a unified theology of religions by its participants. As a result, both in the *Guidelines* and at the Tambaram Consultation on Dialogue in 1988, the WCC pro-

duced questions without answers:

> In what ways is plurality, including religious plurality, within God's purpose?
>
> What do we say about the saving work of God through other religious traditions?
>
> How do the confessions in other religious traditions of decisiveness/uniqueness/universality challenge and clarify Christian convictions about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ?[22]

At Melbourne (1980) the WCC ducked the issues involved, according to its General Secretary, Emilio Castro. While developing a theological perspective on the Gospel announced to the poor, Melbourne lacked a word on "cross-cultural mission, especially in relation to other religions."[23] By 1989, however, the CWME was ready to tackle the issue in Section I's deliberations on "Witness Among People of Other Living Faiths." What Ariarajah describes as "an almost forgotten agenda for fifty years" now gained prominence again.[24] The theology of religions was back onto the world mission agenda. Eugene Stockwell, in his opening address as CWME director, chose to make this one of his four main issues for the Conference.[25] Three publications prior to San Antonio influenced the debate. First was the papers of the Tambaram Consultation (1988) printed in full in the *International Review of Mission* 78(307), July 1988. Second was the publication of *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness,* edited by John Hick and Paul F. Knitter (Orbis 1987), in which various Christian scholars argued that the claim for uniqueness must be abandoned. The third was the article by Lesslie Newbigin entitled "Religious Pluralism and the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ"[26] which was made available to San Antonio delegates. In it Newbigin relates his thought concerning the secularist challenge to the uniqueness of Christ debate. He argues that the uniqueness, decisiveness and centrality of Jesus Christ is historic "fact" rather than subjective value. If the WCC should accept statements that call this in question, Newbigin concludes, "it would become an irrelevance in the spiritual struggles that lie ahead of us."[27] Newbigin was referring to a debate at the 1983 Vancouver assembly where one section so opposed the statement that "we recognize God's creative work in the religious experience of people of other faiths" that it was amended to read, "we recognize God's creative work in the *seeking for religious truth* among people of other faiths." Wesley Ariarajah argues that as a result the WCC allowed for *seeking* within other faiths but discounted the possibility of *finding.*[28]

Two sub-units of the WCC—one concerned with mission and evangelism and the other with dialogue—jointly committed themselves to rethink at Tambaram (1988) and San Antonio the interrelation between mission and dialogue.[29] I monitored the deliberations from sub-section to Section I to plenary at the Conference. The process began intention-

ally with a sharing of dialogical experiences with persons of other faiths. It then moved from concrete experience to general insights, recognizing with Christopher Durasingh, the General Secretary-elect of the CWME, that "genuine witness is dialogical and true dialogue includes witness."[30]

As the participants witnessed to each other as recipients of God's grace through Jesus Christ, a strong consensus emerged that San Antonio must reaffirm the evangelistic mandate—that "the proclamation of the gospel includes an invitation to recognize and accept in a personal decision the saving lordship of Christ" and that "Christians owe the message of God's salvation in Jesus Christ to every person and to every people" (*ME*10,41; Sect.I:27-28). The statement continues: "We cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ" (30).

From this Christological conviction, the Section next considered the mystery that "the Spirit of God is constantly at work in ways that pass human understanding" (*ME*41; Sect.I:26). Therefore "in dialogue we are invited to listen, in openness to the possibility that the God we know in Jesus Christ may encounter us also in the lives of our neighbours of other faiths" (Sect.I:32).

The resolution came in this pregnant paragraph:

> In affirming the dialogical nature of our witness, we are constrained by grace to affirm "that salvation is offered to the whole creation through Jesus Christ" (*Tambaram II). "Our mission to witness to Jesus Christ can never be given up" (*Melbourne 1980). We are well aware that these convictions and the ministry of witness stand in tension with what we have affirmed about God being present in and at work in people of other faiths: we appreciate this tension, and do not attempt to resolve it (33).

In 1980 David Bosch, the respected South African missiologist, reviewed the attitude of the ecumenical movement to other religions. Concerning the frequent charge by evangelicals that the WCC was moving to a universalist theology, Bosch argued that although some WCC documents had in the past suggested universalism, the tendency since Nairobi (1975) had been in the opposite direction. Where evangelicals asked the WCC, "Do you weep for the lost?" the ecumenical counter-question from Melbourne had been, "Do you weep for the poor?"[31] At San Antonio Bosch was the talented rapporteur who drew the findings of 10 sub-groups and the comments of 200 section participants into a consensus.

It is noteworthy that the secretaries of both sub-units support the section report. Raymond Fung, the WCC's Evangelism Secretary, judges that San Antonio faced "conscientiously and boldly the crucial mission issue of witness among people of other living faiths." For him the Section I report "represents a big step in the corporate, ecumenical discussion of the subject." He places side by side these two conclusions—"One, Christians must share our faith with our Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist neighbours and invite them to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Two, Chris-

tians should be open to the possibility of God's presence and work in people of other faiths."[32]

Wesley Ariarajah of the Dialogue sub-unit found the significance of San Antonio in the new salience of the dialogue issue. Persons of other faiths had attended as consultants, the WCC leaders had emphasized the issue in their plenary addresses, and Section I gave it major treatment. He found "many open windows" in the report. In it he perceives a "dialogue theology" in embryo. It is rooted in our commitment to Jesus Christ who is the living Christ at work among all peoples. For Ariarajah the challenge for missiology is to rediscover this sense of what it means that "God was in Christ" and to witness to it.[33]

Evangelical-Ecumenical Rapprochement

A fifth underlying theme in the evangelism agenda at San Antonio concerned relations between Christians of ecumenical and evangelical loyalties. Is there a growing relationship? Did San Antonio enhance that relationship? Yes, I believe so.

In 1980 I was one of about twenty-five persons who attended both the WCC Melbourne Conference and that sponsored by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization at Pattaya, Thailand. Melbourne provided an open forum for dialogue. Although a delegated conference, those attending as observers, consultants, and even press representatives were invited to participate fully in deliberations. Symbolic was the enthusiasm of Waldron Scott, fraternal delegate as General Secretary of the World Evangelical Fellowship, as he drafted portions of the Section III report on "The Church Witnesses to the Kingdom." At Pattaya, a far-more controlled consultation, the ecumenical concerns were voiced more in special meetings and caucus statements than in the main conference. Many persons who stood in the middle as "ecumenical-evangelicals" (or "evangelical-ecumenicals") hoped for more. Canon Simon Barrington-Ward, General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, wrote for them as he observed:

> At Melbourne the church sometimes seemed to have nothing distinctive to bring to the world because it merged into the world's ways. At Pattaya the Church was in danger of bringing nothing to the world because it was separating itself from the world and yet for that very reason remaining bound to it. *In both places we sang in our chains.*[34]

Again at San Antonio those present with evangelical concerns noted the open process of the conference. 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" [signed by more than one-third of those present] it was judged that "this openness has given ample opportunity for evangelical concerns to be voiced and to find expression in conference documents."[35]

Some evangelicals had missed at Melbourne a clear call for world evangelization, although Emilio Castro argued that Melbourne's great concern for Good News to the Poor was the challenge of the unreached.[36] No such ambiguity existed at San Antonio. The Letter contains these words:

> We have been encouraged by the way in which Christians from many traditions have joined here in confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of the world and in affirming that they cannot point to any other way of salvation but Jesus Christ.[37]

The evangelicals in their letter approved of the WCC's holistic concept of mission as they wrote:

> We feel that the expression of concern for the rights of the poor must not be misunderstood as showing that the WCC has relinquished the central concern of devotion and faithful witness to Jesus.[38]

They found misconceptions that the WCC was concerned only for justice issues and that the Lausanne Movement was interested only in personal salvation without regard for the corporate sin which is at the root of injustice. They quoted representative documents from both movements supporting a holistic understanding of mission and evangelism.

While recognizing that the two movements are different in composition (the WCC as a representative body of Protestant and Orthodox denominations; the LCWE as an association of concerned individual Protestant evangelicals), a number of areas for creative cooperation were suggested. Foremost among them was the proposal that the WCC and LCWE hold their next world conferences simultaneously at the same location with joint sessions—a proposal included both in the evangelical Letter and adopted as an Act of Faithfulness by the Conference (Sect.I).

Behind this rapprochement lay strong demographics—both at San Antonio and at the Lausanne II conference at Manila which followed. Christians of the Two-Thirds World of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania, formerly a minority at such conferences, have now become a strong majority (70% of San Antonio delegates). Many of them are both ecumenical and evangelical in their outlooks. They make their voices heard, and have moved into strategic leadership in both movements.

Conclusion

"A psychological barrier has been broken," argues Raymond Fung in his assessment of San Antonio. Formerly many persons felt uncomfortable to talk the language of evangelism at WCC meetings. They feared confrontation. They muted their affirmations with qualifications. But no longer, argues the WCC's Evangelism Secretary: "In San Antonio, Christians committed to evangelism at home were able to express that same

commitment with no hangups and no apologies."[39]

The pluralism and style of WCC conferences, nevertheless, will cause many to continue to doubt it's commitment to evangelism. At times the divergent voices of its members will seem more like an unharmonious quartet. In open conferences in which more time is given for grass-roots testimonies than to perfection of conference resolutions, the WCC will appear to speak with discordant voices. Often "radical" statements will be misinterpreted as the new voice of the Council.

Threatened by such misinterpretations, the major action of the San Antonio delegates was their conscientious support and appropriation of *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* as their holistic understanding of mission and evangelism (Sect.1). With its biblical foundations, urgency for witness, call to conversion, and reliance on God's spirit, it stands as the major ecumenical contribution to a theology of mission for the '90s. In its spirit the San Antonio Conference closed with a Message which picked up the four sub-themes of the Conference in this holistic mission statement.

God calls us, Christians everywhere, to join in:
— proclaiming the good news of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ;
— acting in solidarity with those who suffer and struggle for justice and human dignity;
— sharing justly the earth's resources;
— bearing witness to the Gospel through renewed communities in mission....
"YOUR WILL BE DONE".

NOTES

[1]WCC, "Message from the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, San Antonio, Texas" in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* 13(3), 130.

[2]"Will Uppsala Betray the Two Billion?" *Church Growth Bulletin,* 4(5); reprinted in *The Conciliar-Evangelical Debate: The Crucial Documents, 1964-1976,* ed. by Donald McGavran, pp. 233-241 (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1977).

[3]"Evangelism and the World Council of Churches," *Ecumenical Review,* 20:2 (1968), p. 171.

[4]"In Search of Mission: Reflections on 'Melbourne' and 'Pattaya' ", *Missionalia,* 9:1 (1981), p. 6.

[5]WCC, *Gathered for Life: Official Report, VI Assembly World Council of Churches, Vancouver, Canada, 24 July-10 August 1983,* ed. by David Gill (Geneva, WCC, 1983), p. 324.

[6]David Bosch, " 'Ecumenicals' and 'Evangelicals': A Growing Relationship," *Ecumenical Review,* 40:4 (1988), p. 466; see also Priscilla Pope-Levison, "Evangelism in the WCC from New Delhi to Vancouver," *Mid-Stream,* 28:2 (1989), pp. 159-172.

[7]*Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation,* compiled by Jean Stromberg (Geneva: WCC, 1983).

[8]"Thy Will Be Done: Mission in Christ's Way," [1989] typescript.

[9]Ion Bria, ed., *Martyria/Mission: The Witness of the Orthodox Churches Today* (Geneva: WCC, 1980), pp. 224-230.

[10]"Thy Will Be Done: Mission in Christ's Way."

[11]Potter, "Evangelism and the WCC," p. 171.

[12]*Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Geneva: WCC, 1986), p. 15; "Can the West be Converted?," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* 11:1 (1987), p. 4.

[13]*Foolishness to the Greeks,* p. 94; "Can the West be Converted?", p. 7.

[14]*Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951).

[15]Paul Knitter, *No Other Name?* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985), p. 138.

[16]*Ibid.,* pp. 138-39, 157-59.

[17]WCC, *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975,* ed. by David M. Paton (London: SPCK; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1975), p. 73.

[18]*Ibid.,* pp. 76-77.

[19]Knitter, *No Other Name?,* p. 158.

[20]*The Bible and People of Other Faiths* (Geneva: WCC, 1985), pp. 53-69.

[21]*Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies* (Geneva: WCC, 1979).

[22]"Dialogue and Mission: Issues for Further Study," *International Review of Mission,* 78:307 (1988), p. 449.

[23]"Editorial," *International Review of Mission,* 69:276-277 (1980), p. 387.

[24]"San Antonio and Other Faiths," *Current Dialogue, 16 (August 1989), p. 4.*

[25]"Mission Issues for Today and Tomorrow," typescript.

[26]*International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* 13:2 (1989), pp. 50-54.

[27]*Ibid.,* p. 54.

[28]"San Antonio and Other Faiths," p. 7.

[29]Christopher Duraisingh, "Issues in Mission and Dialogue: Some Reflections," *International Review of Missions,* 77:307 (1988), p. 398.

[30]*Ibid.,* p. 307.

[31]"Behind Melbourne and Pattaya: a Typology of Two Movements," *IAMS Newsletter,* 16-17 (May-Oct. 1980), pp. 32-33.

[32]*A Monthly Letter on Evangelism,* 6-7 (June-July 1989), pp. 3-4.

[33]"San Antonio and Other Faiths," pp. 7-8.

[34]"In Search of a Whole Gospel," *CMS News-letter,* no. 436 (October 1980), p. 2.

[35]"Letter from Those with Evangelical Concerns at the World Council of Churches' Conference at San Antonio to the Lausanne II Conference at Manila," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* 13:3 (1989), p. 132.

[36]F.J. Verstraelen, "After Melbourne and Pattaya: Reflections of a Participant Observer," *IAMS Newsletter,* 16-17 (May-Oct. 1980), p. 38.

[37]"Letter from Those with Evangelical Concerns," p. 132.

[38]*Ibid.*

[39]*A Monthly Letter on Evangelism, p. 6.*

ATHENS, ALDERSGATE, AND SMU: REFLECTIONS ON THE PLACE OF EVANGELISM IN THE THEOLOGICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

William J. Abraham

It is at once a platitude and an understatement to say that problems facing the scholar in the field of evangelism are complex and numerous. Aside from facing minor questions about his or her sex life, or his or her bank balance, there are a plethora of issues which confront one relentlessly. They certainly go beyond the dilemma reported by the celebrated Victorian preacher, Dr. Joseph Parker. In a sermon one Sunday morning in London's City Temple, Parker informed the congregation that he had received a letter stating that a certain gentleman proposed to attend worship that day with a view to subjecting the sermon to philosophical analysis. After pausing for effect Parker continued, "I may add that my trepidation is somewhat mitigated by the fact that the gentleman spells "philosophical" with an 'f'!"

One can start with the simple problem of how one begins to meet requirements for tenure in the modern university. Here it is clear that in the more prestigious institutions one is virtually expected to write a second doctoral dissertation, but to do so in an area where there are few if any introductory textbooks, no agreed set of questions, no agreed canon of literature, and little if any supervision of a substantial or critical nature. Moreover, one must pull this off in an atmosphere where colleagues are at best sympathetic to one's endeavours and at worst openly hostile.

The hostility can take various forms: it can be quiet and unspoken, as it is when it is expressed in blank stares or embarrassed silences at all university faculty gatherings. Here it is very helpful if there is a respected colleague on hand to bear testimony to the fact that one can analyse a difficult concept and follow an argument to its conclusion. Or the hostility can be right out in the open. One colleague in the field was told very directly at his first faculty meeting that the only reason why he was appointed was because money had been made available for his position. So the appointment, it was believed, was political not academic in nature. Sometimes the opposition can be fun to behold. I recall visiting with other new faculty members in the initiation rites at SMU. When another new

---

William J. Abraham is McCreless Professor of Evangelism and Associate Professor of Philosophical Theology at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

colleague heard what I was teaching, she threw up her arms in horror and cautioned me with the words: "Please don't touch me. I'm a liberal Anglo-catholic." At other times the hostility can be delightfully self-contradictory. One dean replied to a request to have a scholar in evangelism on the faculty of his institution in this way. In the first half of the conversation he insisted that everyone on the faculty was teaching evangelism. When this argument was overturned, he then insisted in the second half of the conversation that they should not have a position in evangelism because evangelism could not be taught. So many outsiders are perplexed and bewildered by one's presence.

On the inside of evangelism it is not all plain sailing either. Students, clergy, and laity generally want one to provide a magic program or formula which will save the church from further decline and eventual collapse. In such circumstances the temptations to play the role of messiah are considerable. In addition students have a further request: they want a course which will be relief from the intellectual burdens and challenges they bear elsewhere in their studies. Not surprisingly they also hope that it will be an easy ride where grades are concerned.

Moreover, there are many in the field of evangelism who are deeply worried that bringing evangelism into the halls of our theological seminaries and universities is at best a very risky business. Two distinct concerns need to be identified here. First, there are those who fear that once we make evangelism an area of critical study we shall lose the commitment to action and practical training which they see as constitutive of the proper teaching of evangelism. At the very least they fear that this will be downgraded as secondary, and heaven knows, they say, seminary is remote enough as it stands from real life in the ministry. This concern is in part derived from a deeply pragmatic strain in American church life where action is lifted up as superior to reflection and contemplation; and it is in part derived from a deep anti-intellectualism which pervades many circles where evangelism is taken seriously as a crucial ministry or subministry of the church. Secondly, there are those who fear that too much attention to critical questions about theory and practice in evangelism will erode the minimal theological base without which the ministry of evangelism will suffocate and die. Thus there are some who would insist that evangelism depends on particular confessional theological premises, say commitment to a specific view of the atonement or to a rejection of universalism; in their view it is questionable whether this confessional stance is compatible with the radical pluralism which exists in modern theology or whether it is compatible with the kind of academic freedom which is taken as essential to life in the academy. So on the inside there are pressures which make the life of the aspiring scholar in evangelism less than comfortable.

By far the most pressing challenge, however, is raised by both outsiders and insiders, and it is this. Can evangelism be seriously considered as a legitimate discipline or area of study within the modern academy? The issue was raised by Dean Jim L. Waits two years ago at the annual meeting of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education in Atlanta. While

noting that there are positive signs that evangelism may be accepted as a legitimate discipline in the theological curriculum, he asked a number of very pertinent questions.

> Now for the questions — and we must be candid. The first question is one to which I have already alluded: "Is evangelism a theological discipline?" "Does it belong in the theological curriculum?"
>
> Traditional academic disciplines have certain predictable characteristics: each has a body of content and tradition, each, a definable subject and boundaries. Each possesses a technical language, and methods of inquiry. Each conducts original and basic research.
>
> Only if our teaching in evangelism participates in the rigor of the academic discipline can it justifiably stand alongside the classic and practical subjects of the theological curriculum. I believe that now is the unique opportunity for professors of evangelism to create precisely that kind of theological and practical discipline. To do so will require that you move beyond the common-sensical methodologies of the past to genuine research and analysis. It will require sophisticated understandings of cognate disciplines such as sociology and cultural anthropology as well as theology and Biblical studies. The practical disciplines of preaching, communication and education are natural allies. But in all these you will benefit by the most careful reflection on the boundaries and definition of the discipline as discipline. In my judgement it is still an open question whether the rigor, definition, and basic research about which I am speaking will be forthcoming.[1]

There are a variety of ways to respond to Dean Waits' challenge. One is to undercut it in various ways. Thus one could argue that standards are being applied to the area of evangelism which have not been applied elsewhere. When, for instance, did those working in pastoral care, or liturgics, or homiletics, or Christian education, or the social ministries of the church, meet the standards laid out here so succinctly by Dean Waits? Certainly it is not clear to this writer that these areas of teaching ever provided the kind of formal review of their work requested here. For the most part these have found their way into the seminary curriculum in a haphazard fashion, leaning as best they could on ancillary or neighbouring secular disciplines, as happened most prominently in the case of pastoral care. They were accepted into the curriculum for the same basic reason that has brought evangelism into the academy: the church in one way or another required them as essential to the training of ministers. There was no comprehensive philosophical articulation and defence of their content, tradition, boundaries, technical language, and methods of inquiry employed. They just grew like flowers and weeds in the garden of the seminary, and their planters and cultivators then cast around for

some kind of justification for their existence. It is not yet clear whether such a justification has been forthcoming. And perhaps if the full truth were known, the same might be said for such respected disciplines as church history and biblical studies.

A second and more radical way to undercut Waits' challenge would be to argue that it rests on an unacceptable Cartesian foundationalism which insists that everything needs to be laid out in an ordered, coherent fashion before there can be a rich and healthy discussion of issues related to evangelism. We can imagine a moderate and extreme version of this response. The more moderate version would insist that Waits puts evangelism too quickly into a Procrustean academic bed where themes and considerations, which any sensible person will have to admit relate to evangelism, will have to have the legs cut off them if they are to fit his paradigm of an academic discipline. There is no place, for example, for praxis in his suggestions.[2]

The more extreme version would take a stronger line, arguing that his whole position depends upon neat boundaries between disciplines and upon universal categories of explanation and reason which are historically relative to the culture of the white American males who currently rule the academy. Waits's challenge, it might be said, is yet one more powerplay skillfully deployed by a threatened hierarchy in the academy in order to defend its legitimacy and turf. Hence his challenge and its assumptions will not stand the acids of deconstruction and reconstruction currently confronting the academy at large and the whole range of classical theological disciplines spawned in Europe and North America.

Much as I have sympathy with both these rejoinders, I do not agree with them. As we shall see, the moderate version of the second has much to commend it. But the first response, that is, the one that focuses on the fact that standards are being applied in evangelism which are not applied elsewhere, fails for at least two reasons. Firstly, it works on an entirely *ad hominem* argument which skirts the issue of principle raised by Waits. In other words, those working in evangelism should at some point address the question of the internal logic of their work regardless of whether others can do so for their area of study. And the internal logic of evangelism in turn matters because it is surely important to know what kind of claims one is advancing and what kinds of relevant evidence should be brought to bear on them, and one can helpfully address this issue by mapping the internal grammar of one's discourse.

Secondly, this response fails to acknowledge that many of the areas of inquiry to which appeal is made by way of analogy are themselves not yet fully established as disciplines within the academy, so to appeal to them is to appeal to a weak reed. One simply cannot establish the legitimacy of one's discipline by drawing attention to another discipline whose legitimacy is itself substantially questioned. As to the more radical version of the second argument, that is, the quasi-relativist argument which focuses on the crisis facing the academy as a whole, it takes us into very murky sociological and epistemological waters which cannot be adequately chartered in this paper. So it is best left aside for now.

What I would like to do in this essay, then, is to take up Waits' challenge by reflecting on my own first efforts in the field of evangelism and by making a preliminary report on what I think I am doing.[3] I shall explore how far it is useful to construe the study of evangelism as a topic within systematic theology, as a unique field of its own, and as a part of practical theology. There are in fact four possibilities here, and these, in my view, exhaust the live options available to us. There are four rather than three alternatives because there are two distinct senses in which we can understand practical theology. One way to get at my two alternative readings of practical theology is to lay out very briefly one reading of the classical divisions of theology.

In modern times theology has been divided into four distinct areas. Thus it is customary to speak of four divisions: biblical, historical, systematic, and practical. It is likely that this fourfold division was developed out of a particular set of theological convictions. Thus the division of biblical studies reflected the conviction that the bible was somehow normative for the Christian theologian. Although the bible was studied historically, one studied this set of documents rather thoroughly because they were sacred scripture for the Christian community. The defense of this was in turn articulated and defended in the prolegomena to one's systematic theology; usually a doctrine of divine revelation had a pivotal role as one of the crucial warrants for the canonical status of the bible. Likewise, one suspects that the historical division initially got off the ground because of the privileged status which was given in the Christian community to the creeds of the early church, and this too was taken up and defended in systematic theology.

Although the fourfold division of theology is still technically in force in the curricular arrangements of most seminaries, the rationale for this division has broken down and appears to be beyond repair. Thus biblical studies has collapsed into historical study and is therefore impossible to distinguish in principle from the division of historical studies. The rationale for the latter, in so far as there is one at all, consists primarily in the need of the student to be acquainted with the developing history of Christian activity and reflection. Meanwhile, systematic theology is constantly being swallowed up by special interest theologies, such as Black theology, Third World Liberation theology, feminist theology, political theology, and the like. In such circumstances continuing to work with the traditional fourfold division is a legacy of the past retained for the most part because there is no agreed alternative.

Within the traditional divisions practical theology had a secure place, at least in principle. Theoretically it belonged within theology as a whole because it was thought essential that theologians should work out the implications of their deliberations for the life and ministry of the Christian community.[4] The heart of theology in the classical paradigm was to be found in the work of the systematic theologian. Ideally the systematic theologian would gather up the data from biblical and historical studies and synthesise these with appropriate information and insights from

philosophy, psychology, and other relevant disciplines. He or she would then be in a position to develop a contextually appropriate vision of God, creation, human nature, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church, and so on. Within this the natural inferences for the practical witness and ministry of the church would be drawn. The task of the practical theologian was to carry this task further into the fields of homiletics, pastoral care, catechesis, liturgics, and the like. Practical theology was therefore parasitic on the other three divisions, but it belonged as of right in the total field of theology. We might refer to this conception of practical theology as the academic conception of practical theology. Some might want to call it applied theology, a term gaining ground in England at present.

Yet this never quite took hold. In the English system, practical theology was placed in theological colleges outside the faculties of theology. It was considered a part of the vocational training of the clergy; hence it was not subject to rigorous scrutiny or critical examination. It would be fair to say that it is not taken seriously as a critical, academic endeavor. In North America theology as a whole was placed within the seminaries. Technically a seminary is an institution committed to the training of priests or ministers. Fundamentally it is concerned with the professional education of the clergy; hence it is not surprising that practical theology has been able to secure a home within its boundaries without too much difficulty. Yet it has a precarious existence at best. On the one hand, the other divisions really see themselves as integral to a school of theology where biblical, historical, and systematic-theological issues are pursued as scholarly disciplines pure and simple. The relation of these disciplines to the life of the church is often marginal and secondary. Theology broadly understood is seen as a discipline belonging within the university. On the other hand, practical theology has developed in a thoroughly vocational direction. It basically equips the student to engage in preaching, in pastoral care, in Christian education, in the liturgical life of the church, and so on. The adjective 'practical' in practical theology is therefore generally taken to signal that courses in this field will offer help in performing the obligations entailed in preaching, pastoral care, and the like. Evangelism is simply one more area added to the list of activities to be covered in this domain. But for the pressure from bishops, clergy, and concerned lay people, it would not be in the curriculum at all. It is clear what those applying the pressure desire: they want clergy who can engage in the ministry of evangelism with skill and effectiveness. They want to see evangelism as an integral part of the vocational training of the clergy. Out of this emerges a second conception of practical theology, one we might call the vocational conception of practical theology.

Where does our own work in evangelism fit into all this? Fundamentally it is a critical essay on the ministry of evangelism. It should fall therefore within practical theology. Yet it does not really fit here at all if we understand practical theology to be the training of persons in the requisite skills for Christian ministry, that is, the vocational conception of practical theology. For one thing, it has very little to say about the detailed logistics of evangelistic practice. Only one chapter out of nine is devoted to this

matter, and there our concern was to lay down some broad principles about the ministry of evangelism rather than spell out the details of a program of evangelism for the local church. Moreover, our primary intent was not to equip either the clergy or the layperson to engage in a ministry of evangelism.[5] Rather, the intention was to reflect critically on how evangelism has been understood within Christianity, how it might usefully be conceptualized, and why it deserves to be taken seriously as an integral part of the witness of the Christian church today. The primary concern is therefore intellectual in orientation. The aim is to achieve conceptual clarity and intelligent understanding of the ministry of evangelism. Hence the skills we are seeking to foster are conceptual and intellectual rather than practical and logistical. This is a crucial distinction. It is one thing to teach someone how to go out and evangelize the world; it is quite another thing to teach someone to reflect intelligently and sensibly on what evangelism is as a ministry of the Christian community. It is the latter which has been the focus of our study. To be sure, these two sets of skills may be related. One suspects, for example, that skill in the ministry of evangelism depends minimally on conceptual clarity about evangelism and related concepts. But the two are logically distinct; it is perfectly possible to be very skilled in thinking clearly and critically about evangelism while being hopelessly inadequate in the actual ministry of evangelism. It is the former which has been the focus of our attention.

This is reflected in the way the discussion proceeded.[6] We began by suggesting that evangelism is best approached by construing it as integrally related to the dawning of the kingdom of God. Over several chapters we developed the case that evangelism is best understood as those actions which are governed by the intention to initiate people into the reign of God. This led us to reject both proclamation and church growth as adequate models for understanding evangelism. We then explored with some care what initiation into the kingdom of God entailed, insisting that there were at least six different but related dimensions to it. This led in turn to some suggestions about the ministry of evangelism where we argued that evangelism must be rooted in worship, that it requires the announcement of the dawning of the reign of God, and that it entails the setting up afresh of the catechumenate in the life of the church. Then in the last two chapters we argued that this robust approach to evangelism was entirely compatible with the modern world. It was entirely fitting given the development of a secular society and it did not in the least entail intolerance of other religious traditions.

Does this mean then that our essay has been an exercise in sytematic theology? This is one fruitful way to describe it. It takes up a topic in ecclesiology and explores at length how we should think about it. We presuppose here, of course, that evangelism is to be understood as a ministry of the church naturally comes under the topic of ecclesiology. Thus understood we are working at the other end of the playing field of systematic theology, far away from that section of the terrain which deals with such topics as the authority of scripture, the doctrine of the trinity, or the nature of creation. We are working from below, isolating a specific

task of the church and subjecting the reflection and witness of the church in this area to critical examination. The topic of evangelism is, moreover, explored in a fashion which is in keeping with the general requirements of theology. Biblical, historical, sociological, philosophical, and systematic-theological considerations are drawn on to construct a particular vision of evangelism which could be accepted with integrity by the contemporary Christian community and its members. So there is merit in treating this as simply an essay on a much neglected topic within systematic theology.

Yet one wonders whether this does full justice to the issues we have addressed. We are alerted to this by noting that on the surface it makes intuitive sense to speak of evangelism as not just a topic within systematic theology but as a distinct discipline within theology as a whole. Thus it is very odd to speak of someone as a lecturer or professor in the doctrine of the trinity but it is not so odd to speak of someone as a lecturer or professor in the field of evangelism. This could be merely a matter of psychological reaction, of course, and not very much should be made to hang on it either way. But it is worth pursuing for a moment. Can we think of evangelism as a distinct subdiscipline within Christian theology broadly conceived?

The obvious conceptual candidate available to us is to construe evangelism as a field-encompassing field. The counters of the field are initially determined by the concept of evangelism we deploy. Thus evangelism would be defined very generally as that field committed to the critical investigation of those activities in the church governed by the intention to initiate people into the kingdom of God. This would demarcate the boundaries of the subject to be investigated. Thus understood evangelism would be distinguished not by the distinctive methods deployed to examine it but by the activities covered by the concept itself. The methods deployed would be drawn from other disciplines encompassing the field of evangelism. Hence it would draw on biblical, historical, sociological, psychological, systematic-theological, and other relevant considerations to deal with the questions raised by critical reflection of evangelism.[7]

There are several reasons for construing evangelism in this fashion. First, it is highly unlikely that evangelism will receive the attention it merits if it is treated as a minor topic in systematic theology. This is as much as it can hope for within systematic theology in the current climate; if it receives any attention at all, it will probably be dismissed in a paragraph or a footnote. The issues which should be covered in the area of evangelism deserve much more than this. Secondly, by treating evangelism as a separate field at least one dimension of the church's ministry will be evaluated in a serious manner. Currently the practical ministries of the church receive only scant critical attention. The primary aim of those appointed to work in this area is to provide a practical training which will enable the clergy to be competent professionally in preaching, pastoral care, catechesis, and liturgics. The aim of work in these areas is fundamentally logistical rather than critical. Clearly, there is a place in the economy of the church for this kind of training. As it stands, however, little or no help is given in the delicate and essential task of examining critically and

systematically the actual work of the church in its many ministries. This requires systematic attention to data and warrants which cannot be pursued in any kind of logistical training. Hence there is merit in developing a specific field which will attend to what is done in evangelism and make critical suggestions as to how the church might better fulfill her obligations in this area. Within this, the experience and practice of the church can be appropriately brought to bear in the formation of adequate judgement and discernment. Finally, developing a new field allows the full range of questions evoked by the activities related to or constituted by evangelism to receive the attention they deserve. There are a host of questions which arise. Inquiring students will want to know how the church has evangelised down through the ages and across the many cultures which the Christian faith has encountered. They will want to explore the significance of various psychological accounts of human development for our understanding of evangelism. They will be intrigued by the significance of the whole range of Christian doctrines for evangelism. How, for example, does our understanding of salvation, or of atonement, or of the Holy Spirit, effect our thinking about evangelism? They will seek to explore the relation between evangelism and such topics as apologetics, pastoral care, social action, and preaching. They will attempt to unravel the scattered biblical references to evangelism and related topics. They will deal with the relation between evangelism and inter-religious dialogue and explore the significance of new developments in the media for the practice of evangelism. These are some of the issues which cry out for examination; there is surely more than enough to exercise the best that scholars can muster in a variety of disciplines. Yet as one pursues this it seems exaggerated to place these matters in a whole new field which is confined to evangelism. Somehow it seems cumbersome and even pretentious to construct a field-encompassing field to take up the issues we have identified. We need something more modest and something more intimately related to the areas which lie in the neighbourhood of evangelism. This is more than suggested by the fact that if we reject the concept of evangelism canvassed here and reconstruct it along traditional lines as proclamation then the idea of evangelism as a field-encompassing field would collapse immediately. Evangelism would instantly become a subject within the field of homiletics. There simply would not be enough data to constitute any kind of separate subject. Moreover, it is pertinent to recall that in our deliberations we touched again and again on issues which fall within the standard divisions of practical theology, however this is conceived. We dealt not only with proclamation, but also with aspects of catechesis, social action, missiology, and liturgy; and we touched on themes which are taken up within the current literature in these areas.

It might then well be the case that evangelism best finds its place in the academy not in a field in its own but within the wider field of practical theology. By practical theology I mean here practical theology in the academic sense, conceived at this juncture not as a disparate set of courses designed for the practical training of clergy but as a genuine discipline committed to rigorous and comprehensive reflection on the mission and

work of the church. Practical theology would be that division within theology assigned the task of reflecting critically on the witness of the church to the fullness of the reign of God in preaching, pastoral care, social action, Christian education, worship, and evangelism. All the relevant data and warrants from scripture, tradition, reason, and experience would be brought to a single, burning focus directed at articulating the full significance of the gospel in these logically distinct but empirically inseparable dimensions of the church's life. In my view this way of conceiving practical theology has great promise were it to be pursued with thoroughness and creativity. It might even confirm the wisdom in the older view which saw practical theology not only as a proper discipline within theology but as the very crown of theology itself.

Having stated my preference in the form of a counsel of perfection, I must hastily report, however, that I do not think that this promise will be fulfilled. Two major obstacles stand in the way. First, those working in practical theology depend crucially on the health and welfare of the classical disciplines of theology, most especially biblical studies, church history, and systematic theology, and the cognate disciplines deployed in these areas. In my view at least two of these, biblical studies and systematic theology, are currently facing such internal turmoil and splendid, exotic confusion that it will be extremely difficult for scholars in evangelism who go mining in these areas for raw material to receive the kind of collegiality and nurture they will need. They will be seen primarily as amateur intruders and trespassers, operating without the requisite licence. To speak evangelistically it will take a radical conversion to see much progress in this area.

Secondly, those working in the cognate areas of practical theology are very unlikely to join in the development of the kind of vision I have identified. There may be a rhetoric of integration and even a verbal commitment to integrate, but I am skeptical overall of the results. This is in part because other workers in the field of practical theology will not lightly, if at all, surrender their hard won and barely achieved autonomy to enter into the envisioned kind of deeply integrated, critical reflection on the whole range of practical ministries and actions in which the church engages. This is in part, moreover, a psychological and sociological question of understandable self-defense, but it is probably much more a matter of the burdens that those in the practical disciplines bear in the seminary. They are called and appointed both to reflect critically on what they are doing as scholars and teachers, and they are appointed to prepare students vocationally to preach, evangelize, baptize, teach Sunday School classes, initiate and carry on the church's social ministries, and the like. Putting the issue bluntly, there are only so many hours in the day, and it is difficult enough at present to find the time to meet one's obligations in the academy and the church.

What then should those committed to original research and reflection on evangelism do? Should they give up in despair? Not at all. Firstly, they should ignore the jokes, the exclusivist stares, and the intolerant hostility of those in the academy who would relegate them to the sawdust trail of

history. Secondly, they should meet the challenge of their deans and colleagues without rancour and without self-deprecation. In turn they should intelligently challenge their colleagues in other areas of seminary life to answer the kind of questions raised so candidly by Dean Waits, refusing to accept answers which appeal to the status quo or to outworn, inadequate, and often non-existent, philosophical accounts of the seminary curriculum.

Thirdly, and most importantly, they should go about their business as normal, carefully gathering and critically reviewing the vast body of material and information needed to understand what is happening in evangelism. Within this there is plenty of scope for making normative proposals with respect to the theory and practice of evangelism. For this to be of optimum quality over the next generation scholars in evangelism need to make a virtue of their present necessities, that is, they should accept without apology that some of their number will spend most of their time on the streets and in the varied cultures of the world, making Christian disciples and building churches; that some will continue to study with a passion the growth and decline of the church across the globe; and that some will approach the study of issues related to evangelism from their primary academic work in history, biblical studies, philosophy, sociology, communications, and the like. If there is time in the midst of this for scholars and evangelists to ponder the internal logic of their ruminations, this can do nothing but good. My own judgment at this point is that evangelism is very clearly taking shape as a complex, field-encompassing field, and it will take a generation or more to see it fully established as an accepted if not a respected member of the theological academy. If we do not however have the time, inclination, or skill to conduct such reflection, we can recall that many areas of research and study are like most cities outside North America: they were built without neat blueprints or agreed methods of operation. They grew like weeds and flowers and have a charm and purpose which only history and hindsight can finally vindicate.

NOTES

[1]Jim L. Waits, "Evangelism and the Theological Curriculum," *Journal Of The Academy For Evangelism In Theological Education,* III (1987-88), pp. 44-45.

[2]For a useful route into this matter, see Donald A. Schon, *The Reflective Practitioner* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

[3]See William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

[4]The first chairs in Practical Theology were introduced in Vienna in 1774 and in Tübingen in 1794.

[5]This should not for a moment be taken to mean that I am uninterested in the logistics of evangelism either as a scholar or a Christian minister. I have worked extensively in the actual practice of evangelism and I currently serve as a consultant with the Southwest Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church. I have expressed my account of the theory and practice of evangelism in handbook form in *METHOD in Evangelism: A Handbook For Clergy and Laity in the United Methodist Church* (San Antonio: The Council on Church Revitalization and Extension, 1988).

[6]See the early chapters of *The Logic of Evangelism.*

[7]What I have in mind here is not invented out of thin air simply to make space for evangelism in the curriculum. As Paul Hirst recognised over twenty years ago, we need the category of a field to cover areas generally recognised as belonging even to a classical liberal education. ". . . there are those organisations which are not themselves disciplines or subdivisions of any discipline. They are formed by building together round specific objects, or phenomena, or practice pursuits, knowledge that is characteristically rooted elsewhere in more than one discipline. It is not just that these organisations make use of several form of knowledge, for all the sciences use mathematics, the arts use historical knowledge, and so on. Many of the disciplines borrow from each other. But these organisations are not concerned, as these disciplines are, to validate any one logically distinct form of expression. They are not concerned with developing a particular structuring of experience. They are held together simply by subject-matter, drawing on all forms of knowledge that can contribute to them. Geography, as the study of man in relation to the environment, is an example of a theoretical study of this kind, engineering an example of a practical nature. I see no reason why such organisations of knowledge, which I shall refer to as 'fields', should not be endlessly constructed according to particular theoretical or practical interests." See Paul H. Hirst, "Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge," in R.S. Peters, ed., *The Philosophy of Education* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 104.

Case Studies

VERBATIMS AS A TOOL IN THE INSTRUCTION OF EVANGELISM

Harry L. Poe

The practice and study of evangelism continue to stir controversy inside and outside the church. Within theological education one of the perpetual areas of sensitivity centers in the place of witnessing experiences in a course on evangelism. A variety of models exist for integrating the study of evangelism with the practice of evangelism, but professors of evangelism at a meeting I attended recently confessed their dissatisfaction with the models they knew.

Some schools require all students to engage in personal evangelism and turn in a report form each week, irrespective of their enrollment in an evangelism class. While this approach provides a structure that requires practical involvement, the experience remains divorced from the classroom. This system provides little room for supervision or critique of the students' methodology and style. Rather than improving the students' ability to share their faith, this approach may only give the students a great deal of experience doing it wrong! The great advantage of this approach is its way of helping the student develop witnessing as an intentional personal discipline.

Some schools require one or two witnessing experiences connected with an evangelism course. While this approach places the experience in the context of the study of evangelism, such a paltry experience provides little more than a basis for class lecture. Though the students may have a theoretical base for sharing their faith, without the opportunity to appropriate the theory to one's own style of ministry, it remains mere theory. A few experiences constitute little more than "busy work," for the student can do little more than experience witnessing. Learning requires a variety of experiences over a period of time during which the student can observe their own development.

Several hybrid approaches exist. At the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary all students are required to take Continuing Witness Training. The Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention developed CWT along the same model as Evangelism Explosion.

Harry L. Poe is Assistant Professor of Evangelism at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

The material is excellent for training highly motivated people to witness under the close supervision of an "equipper" who demonstrates the model presentation. Unfortunately, the strength of CWT becomes its weakness when applied to the large classroom setting without an equipper among a student body that may not be highly motivated to do evangelism. Because of its rich evangelistic heritage, the seminary at New Orleans has made this approach work, but it would not easily transfer.

In many cases, professors of evangelism balk at requiring their students to witness. Some fear wholesale rebellion from their students. Others see it as placing undue pressure on students to perform for a grade. While most would favor one or two experiences, perhaps with a written report, they would refrain from more required witnessing experiences as too burdensome. Even if students were required to bear witness to their faith all semester, how would it be made into a learning experience rather than "busy work?"

When I left the Evangelism Department of the Kentucky Baptist Convention to teach evangelism at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I went with an echoing plea from pastors: "Teach them how to lead someone to faith in Christ." Many pastors complained that they had not learned that lesson in seminary, but they also confessed that they had not wanted to learn it. I knew the embarrassment and anguish many pastors felt because I had met with so many privately to teach them how to share the gospel.

The Verbatim Process

The use of verbatims provides a way to evaluate witnessing skills while linking ministry to the classroom. I require the students in my classes to write a verbatim report of a witnessing conversation each week for ten weeks. To relieve the anxiety over grading and to eradicate the idea that successful witnessing depends upon the response of the other person, verbatims do not receive an individual grade. Students receive full credit for completing the assignment regardless of how poorly they share the gospel. Students who do not do the assignment, however, receive no credit. Furthermore, verbatims may not be turned in late or "made up" when missed.

Students had the freedom, in fact the encouragement, to report on conversations with the same person more than once. The validity of the verbatim does not depend upon the student successfully sharing a full presentation of the gospel; the student need only commence the encounter with the intention of sharing the gospel. Thus, the student suffers no penalty for circumstances beyond their control. Instead, in all situations the verbatim exercise focuses on what the student can learn from the experience.

This approach borrows from a methodology utilized by professors of pastoral care but with adaptions necessary for evangelism. Students followed a prescribed formula in preparing their verbatims:

VERBATIM FORM[1]

NAME

COURSE NAME

VERBATIM NUMBER

DATE

I. *Preliminary Information*

State the basis for the contact with this person and what you know about them. Give the name or code for the person.

II. *Preparation*

What is the purpose of this conversation or visit if other than assignment visitation? How does your knowledge of the person(s) influence your plans, attitudes, preparation?

III. *Observations*

What sights, sounds, smells, activity, etc. impress you during the visit or conversation? What is the physical and social setting? What is the appearance of the person(s) with whom you talk?

IV. *Interpersonal Relationship*

What was done and said by each person? What was the feeling tone as well as the objective conversation? Give the actual sequence of what you said and what the other person said as it occurred. Separate nonverbal communication by parentheses. Indicate your own feelings through the conversation by parentheses.

V. *Theological Reflection*

A. List insights gained about the other person's spiritual condition. Does the conversation indicate implications for future ministry and/or personal relationship?

B. Assess the dynamics of communication. Was it a true conversation, a lecture, two monologues?

C. Did an opportunity to present the gospel arise? If so, was it presented? If not, why not? If presented, why did you present it the way you did?

D. Critique yourself. What did you learn about yourself? How were you helpful and/or unhelpful?

Learning through Doing

The approach of required witnessing coupled with verbatim reflection satisfies the perennial pedagogical task of providing a context for applying theory to practice. By making the requirement a semester-long process, students have enough experiences to profit from the practice. By their involvement in a semester-long experience, students have enough encounters to see the uniqueness of each encounter and that no single approach to witnessing is best for all situations. This method of instruction provides enough encounters for students to have both good and bad experiences. One student was set upon by a dog when he visited the family member of a person in his church. He considered it an "F" verbatim. Yet, by the end of the semester the owner of the dog had been baptized, and the student had a new understanding of how to share his witness.

This process approach to training allows students to see the growing openness to spiritual matters of the ones to whom they witness over a period of time, an experience precluded by token witnessing assignments designed to give students a "flavor" of evangelism. Over time students also grow increasingly aware of opportunities to witness which they once would have overlooked. Likewise, the frequency of the requirement heightens student awareness. The duration of the assignment allows the students to recognize their own growth in witnessing skills which they have catalogued in their verbatims.

The length of the assignment helps students recognize that not everything has to happen in one conversation. Rather, conversations have a cumulative effect over time. The assigment provides a structure for cultivation of an evangelistic ministry to an individual over a period of weeks and teaches the importance of this dynamic in legitimate evangelism. Students begin to see that even an isolated word or sentence plays a part in the process of conviction and coming to faith.

This approach gives actual experience that cannot come from the simulation of role play in class. It helps students make concrete in their own lives why we witness by relating to real people with real spiritual and physical needs. The verbatim provides a laboratory situation by reflection to see how issues of theology and practice of ministry relate. By week six or seven the students begin to see how the theory from class begins to express itself in conversation. The length of the assignment also helps students learn patience and persistence in the work of evangelism. One student went to a housing project to visit the friend of one of his youth named Karen. Unfortunately, he had the wrong apartment number. He went to four different apartments where a Karen lived before he found the right one. During that visit, she came to faith in Christ.

Small Group Reflection

Small group discussion of the verbatims gives an additional dimension to the learning potential of the verbatims. The small group discussions help students identify dynamics in their witnessing that they do not or cannot see through their own reflection. Members of the group raise issues that would go unmentioned if students merely reported the results of their witnessing experiences without a verbatim of the conversation. Since the assignment does not carry a grade, the small group creates the necessary accountability in learning the discipline of witnessing and taking the assignment seriously.

On a more personal level, the group provides mutual coaching. In the group students can discuss how others would deal with a similar situation. Furthermore, students gain access to the experiences of others, thus multiplying the kinds of situations the students have contemplated. The group also gives support in dealing with mutual fears and anxieties. As the interpersonal dynamic of the group develops in the course of the semester, the members increasingly provide accountability, affirmation, encouragement, and feed-back.

Needed inspiration and motivation to continue the assignment come through hearing of good experiences other students have had. When bad experiences occur, the group helps put the pieces back together. In the course of a semester, students have a basis for observing the developing uniqueness of the style of each person in the group. Despite this uniqueness, however, students also have a basis for identifying the common themes that permeate the evangelistic enterprise as experienced by the whole group.

Dimensions of Learning

The verbatim approach which includes the actual witnessing conversation, the student's verbatim and reflections, and the small group critique provides several dimensions of learning which required witnessing by itself could not achieve. Learning goals made possible by this approach include self-awareness, communication skill, ability to apply the gospel to a situation, spiritual growth, ministry strategy skill development, and structural needs for a church evangelism program.

Self-awareness

The greatest hindrances to witnessing tend to be internal with the Christian: fears, doubts, theological uncertainty, biblical ignorance, spiritual insensitivity. One of the greatest advantages of the verbatim is the opportunity it gives for new self-awareness. In reflecting on the witnessing experience, students must identify their own insecurities and reasons for insecurities during the experience. Particularly, the verbatim forces students to identify any negative feelings about evangelism with which they need to deal. By identifying their own issues and agenda,

students can learn to recognize the effect of these matters on their ministry. This dimension of the verbatim points out the extent to which our emotional baggage can cripple our ministries.

The verbatim helps students recognize patterns in ministry style over a period of time; such as engagement avoidance, manipulation, insensitivity. It helps identify tendencies to vacillate or go off on tangents. This process helps a student see strengths as well as weaknesses in their witnessing style. In this way students can learn from their mistakes through critique rather than compounding the mistakes through uncritical practice. The verbatim allows the student to objectify their experience and learn from it rather than be flattered by it or discouraged by it. Through this means students are forced to engage any fears they have of witnessing by reflecting on the dynamics of the encounter. At the same time students must come to grips with the motive for witnessing. Others must face their fear of approaching people about Christ. Students must deal with theological issues in a concrete setting and determine if faith is a valid topic of conversation, and if not, then why they do not consider it as valid as football or basketball. Here students must recognize the extent to which they have been muzzled by popular culture and intimidated into keeping the "Messianic Secret."

Through growing self-awareness, students can be led to develop sensitivity to the kinds of issues that church members deal with that inhibit their witness. Throughout the learning experience for seminary students, they need a basis for seeing how they will in turn teach their church members. From what they learn about themselves, students begin to recognize generally the difference between genuine obstacles to the gospel and those tacitly imposed by the witness. Through the weekly reflection process that the verbatims provide, students receive a challenge to grow in their effectiveness as a witness. They learn that they can witness without being perfect and that the Lord actually uses imperfections.

The verbatim process helps students identify the fears that cripple their personal witness. Through the small group discussion time, students come to realize how common their experience of fear may be with other ministers. They are not alone in their fears and they learn to face their fears constructively with others. This group approach helps neutralize fears. Students learn that fears are not a reason for not witnessing. Fears simply tell us things about ourselves. The verbatim provides a structure for facing fears and learning from them rather than being controlled by them. Students then have a basis for understanding why they retreat from a conversation instead of presenting a challenge to faith in Christ.

Communication Skill Development

Honest self-awareness provides a basis for critical evaluation of one's communication skills. The verbatim provides a painfully vivid script of a person's style of interpersonal communication. The arrogantly self-assured budding evangelist may have a communication style that

guarantees responses but precludes the possibility of faith. Part of the reflection process requires students to critique the communication dynamics in the verbatim. Does it reflect a true conversation, or does it indicate a lecture, monologue, sales pitch, apology, or perhaps two independent monologues?

By raising awareness of communication dynamics, the verbatim encourages the development of conversational skill as well as skill in recognizing the spiritual significance of statements or issues raised in conversation. The critique of communication style points out the problem of answering questions people are not asking because of a tendency to direct the conversation according to the witness's agenda rather than responding to the other person's particular spiritual needs. Writing out the actual conversation helps students learn how to ask better questions: open-ended questions that allow the other person to speak their mind instead of leading questions that allow a simple yes or no response. The exercise also helps students grow intheir sensitivity of when to speak and when to let people "save face."

Reflection on the conversation helps make students conscious of the assumptions they make when they use the church language of their own experience. This problem includes assumptions about another person's theological experience and knowledge. Likewise, analysis of the verbatim points out the fallacy of assuming we know what someone means when they make a statement or use a term that requires clarification.

The labor of evaluation helps a student consider alternative ways of saying things so that faith in Christ can be expressed without being offensive. This process reinforces the need to make the expression of faith an engaging interchange rather than a lecture or a hollow recitation. In this way the student must deal with the question of whether they are being understood and if, in fact, they are understanding someone else. The verbatim indicates when our style of communication is directed toward winning an argument or making a sale, rather than toward helping someone come to faith in Christ. By growing sensitivity to these issues, students begin to recognize how Christ meets the deep issues of life as they move beyond cant recitation of theological formulas to genuine conversations about faith.

The verbatim provides a context for helping students learn to present the gospel on the basis of a person's felt spiritual needs. In order to do this, however, students must learn to listen. The verbatim reflects the progress of a student in developing listening skills to determine the deep felt need of an individual, signs of resistance to "religion," previous religious experience and the theological presuppositions that implies, and ministry needs. Reflection and evaluation of the verbatims helps students realize the gospel implications of existential comments about loneliness, anger, isolation, frustration, and the other plagues of contemporary society. In order to have the key to address the gospel opening of a person, however, students must learn the importance of listening as opposed to talking when witnessing. Creating a climate for the other person to tell their story and learning how to listen to another person's

story gives the clue for how to relate the gospel to them.

Application of the Gospel

The verbatim process requires students to reflect on why they present the gospel in a particular situation the way they do. This dimension of the verbatim forces the student to grow in their understanding of the implications of the gospel and how it meets a variety of human needs. This aspect helps students make the gospel personal and specific to individuals and not simply generic to groups. Students have a structure for developing skill in relating the gospel to someone spiritually, culturally, emotionally, intellectually, psychologically, or in terms of whatever issue may be the crucial theme of that person's life.

This part of the exercise helps students practice applying the gospel to life situations. Students recognize the need to translate the gospel from propositions in a systematic scheme to answers that address a heart-felt need. By addressing this concern over the course of a semester, students begin to focus in their own minds what the events surrounding Jesus 2000 years ago have to do with a person living today. Students begin to realize that to avoid the emptiness of a sounding gong, they must be able to apply the gospel to the key issues people face.

With this concern in mind, the verbatim helps the students see the implications of the gospel in ordinary affairs, leading to a growing consciousness of the spiritual dimension of life. This awareness of the spiritual in a world that has trained itself to ignore the spiritual, may be the most important aspect of the whole verbatim process. Faced with their habitual way of interacting, students have a basis for dealing with the issues and learning to put them in meaningful and relevant biblical and existential perspective. Further, this approach challenges the student to articulate what particular aspects of the gospel have to do with people living today. By working to apply the gospel to speclfic situations, students learn to move beyond intellectualizing the gospel to helping people.

Spiritual Growth

Spiritual growth often comes through discipline, and the verbatim structure provides opportunity for the development of discipline that will lead to spiritual growth. The experience of witnessing each week calls attention to the spiritual dimension of what on the surface appears to be a mechanical process while reinforcing the need for a close walk with the Lord and reliance on the Holy Spirit in witnessing. In helping others know Jesus Christ, students come to a more profound understanding of their own faith which they must now verbalize in a way that makes sense.

Over the course of a semester, students have the time to experience the presence of God in witnessing encounters. Having dealt with their own personal issues that stand in the way of witnessing, and having

grown in sensitivity to issues in the lives of other people, students have a context for experiencing and recognizing what can only be called "spiritual warfare." Freed from the American cultural mentality of the gospel as a product that a skilled witness can market, students may discover that evangelism is essentially a supernatural matter in which Christians cooperate with God. This awareness focuses the need for prayer in evangelism. Because of the duration of the assignment, students also begin to discern the effects of prayer in connection with multiple verbatims with the same person.

Relationship to Ministry

Students who lack the kind of outgoing personality that allows them to walk up to strangers and immediately ask a probing question usually have a difficult time with this assignment until they learn to relate evangelism to their overall ministry. The assignment reinforces the need to establish relationships in order for a meaningful opportunity for long-term witness to occur. Evangelism always needs a context. Without regular contact with non-Christians in one's ministry, no one has a context for doing evangelism. This fact points out the necessity of integrating evangelism into one's ministry rather than adding it as another burden on top of family, school, job, and ministry responsibilities. Frustration in meeting the requirements of one conversation per week demonstrates how few non-Christians a minister or committed Christian relates to on a regular basis. The assignment forces students to begin developing the habit of having regular contact with non-Christians and the necessity of carrying the ministry of the church beyond the four walls of the building.

Students begin to realize the need for a strategy of evangelism that makes evangelism an integral part of the ministry of the church when they try to carry out the witnessing assignment and experience the difficulty of developing an opening to share the gospel. Apart from a ministry context or personal relationship, the task proves very difficult. This dynamic helps reinforce the development of ministerial identity for students who might see ministry as a future aspect of their life rather than a present reality. While ministry forms the context for evangelism, evangelism also forms the context for discovering other ministry possibilities and provides the opportunity for deepening relationships and trust. As part of the theological reflection on the verbatim, students must deal with plans for follow-up ministry, a traditional weakness of some evangelism approaches.

Basic Foundations

Through the verbatim process, students learn basic foundational concepts needed for the practical implementation of a strategy of evangelism in a local church. Because ministerial leadership composes such a vital ingredient in the effectiveness of a church's programs of evangelism,

the development of ministerial effectiveness forms the focus of the verbatim exercise. It helps develop a student's own style of witnessing in terms of their own personality and spiritual gifts. It also points up the structural needs of evangelism that either helped or hindered the student in completing the assignment.

Weekly witnessing impresses upon students the need for a good prospect file. Such a file needs regular maintenance and as much information as possible. The assignment also demonstrates the need for witness training and role modeling to equip lay people for the ministry of evangelism. Students who belittle the "shallowness" of witness training programs soon see their own need of such an introduction. The need for a good knowledge of the Bible also becomes clear as students find themselves called upon to address the spiritual needs of people in a way that calls for more than the way the student "feels comfortable" sharing the gospel. An ongoing visitation program makes this assignment an easy matter for some students. However, students involved in churches that have no formal outreach structure soon recognize the value of such a plan. Just as students have learned through doing, this process demonstrates the importance of giving church members actual experience witnessing as a part of any plan to equip them to share their faith. By making the course experiential, this approach to teaching evangelism makes students sensitive to the pressure facing lay people when called upon to share their faith in the marketplace.

The ministry of evangelism requires intentionality. Students found that evangelism took effort on their part, but that when they exercised the effort they began to see opportunities they would have missed before. The gospel involves risk taking, both in witnessing to the lost and in reflecting on the experience with colleagues. The assignment challenges the recent trend in ministry that emphasizes "feeling comfortable." The very nature of the ministry means that in the most necessary ministry roles, we will feel very uncomfortable.

Conclusion

This approach to teaching evangelism lends itself to a variety of courses other than Personal Evangelism, because in the final analysis, evangelism focuses on one person introducing another person to Jesus. Whether a course in Theology of Evangelism, Church Growth, or Cross-Cultural Evangelism, the concepts can be applied through the verbatim process. To teach evangelism without actual experience would be as ludicrous as teaching Greek without requiring students to translate or Theology without thinking about God.

Initially, the students hate the assignment. Some will go into shock upon learning of it. Nevertheless, they learn to evangelize. They will forget lectures, but they will remember their experience of learning. Most of the material for this article came from the student evaluations of the verbatim process. Though students acknowledged their reservations, such as stress, intimidation, integrity, and resentment, the students over-

whelmingly urged the continuation of the requirement as a learning tool. This approach may not transfer to every theological tradition, but it is an alternative that ties experience to scholarship.

Finally, as one would hope, people came to faith through this assignment. Students who never saw themselves as evangelists discover that they can be mid-wives for God's new children. Sometimes the discovery comes several months after the end of a course as a student follows through on a witnessing relationship that commenced during the course. This week a student stopped me in the hall to tell me of the baptism that would soon take place because of something that began when he was required to tell someone about Jesus. He was a little embarrassed at being so happy, because he had not been the "evangelistic type."

NOTES

[1]Adapted from David Belgum, *Clinical Training for Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), pp. 79-80.

REINFORCING THE NEED FOR EVANGELISM: THE PORTRAYAL OF CHRISTIANS IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

William A. Groover, Jr.

The evangelist who reads widely in "secular literature" will notice a trend. Authors frequently include their apologetics as subplots. It is not unusual in best selling books to find an author putting his or her ideas about Christianity into the mouths of key characters. Dorothy L. Sayers drew a conclusion about the image of Christianity typically portrayed in fiction: "When an average Christian is represented in a novel or a play, he is pretty sure to be shown practicing one or all of the Seven Deadly Virtues just enumerated (i.e., respectability, childishness, mental timidity, dullness, sentimentality, censoriousness, and depression of spirits)."[1] A perfect example is the parish priest in Ms. Sayers own, *Nine Taylors.*

In *The Prince of Tides,* author Pat Conroy tells a family's history through narrator Tom Wingo. Tom's grandfather is Amos Wingo, a barber and bible salesman known to local residents as the frequent recipient of visions of God (of which he wrote detailed accounts for the newspaper), and for carrying a ninety-pound cross through the streets of town annually on Good Friday. Grandmother Wingo knows him as the man who said, "Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus," while making love to her.[2]

When a positive word is spoken about a character's faith, that character may be unrecognizable as a Christian. Another example from the same Conroy book will illustrate. The family's grandmother, Tolitha, is described as never attending church or openly professing a belief in God. She consulted ouija boards, witch doctors, and Eastern religions. Still, the narrator described her as, "...the most Christian woman I have ever known."[3]

An author can politely argue against the need to be "born again" by modeling as a Christian a character who has not had a personal experience with Christ. Dr. Carl Sagan used this technique in *Contact.* His heroine, Ellie Arroway, defended her claim to faith saying: "I'm a Christian in the sense that I find Jesus Christ to be an admirable historical figure. I think the Sermon on the Mount is one of the greatest ethical statements and one of the best speeches in history. I think that 'Love your

---

William A. Groover, Jr. is Senior Pastor at Oak Park Baptist Church, Jeffersonville, Indiana.

enemy' might be the long-shot solution to the problem of nuclear war. I wish he was alive today. It would benefit everybody on the planet. But I think Jesus was only a man. A great man, a brave man, a man with insight into unpopular truths. But I don't think he was God or the son of God or the grandnephew of God."[4]

Whether an author preaches "examine your life and set God's standards to match those you already meet", "all Christians are fools", or any other distorted gospel, the result is the same. Readers who already want to believe the same things will read these apologetics and allow the author to persuade them or reinforce their positions. "After all, millions of people are reading this book; the author must be pretty sharp." Secular fiction, regardless of the media used, can present a problem for evangelists. This article offers some initial suggestions for countering such stumbling blocks to evangelism.

First, evangelists need to know what is being said and why authors are making the statements. In his book *Between Two Worlds*, John R. W. Stott builds a convincing argument for preachers to study the biblical text and the world which produced it as well as the modern world to which he/she will interpret the message. Stott's metaphor for preaching is building bridges between these two worlds. Part of the preacher's study should include newspapers and all good forms of literature: stage, screen, and books. The problems which oppress people and the issues with which they wrestle will often be addressed in bestsellers, and in language they understand (unlike many sermons). Stott's arguments for relevancy in preaching extend to the evangelistic task as well.[5]

Popular literature will also identify the obstacles which must be overcome. If a reader of Carl Sagan's *Contact* thinks "born again Christians are raving fools who see devils behind every bush," like the character Rev. Billy Jo Rankin, it is unlikely evangelistic efforts will succeed. Similarly, this same reader may accept the "testimony" of Sagan's heroine as an adequate statement of faith. Either way, before evangelism will be successful, these preconceived portraits of Christianity which were at least reinforced by various books must be corrected. People must realize becoming a Christian does not mean becoming a fool, but it does mean a change in ones life. The only way these images can be addressed is if the evangelist is familiar with typical examples and understands them.

A good classroom discussion can be promoted by selecting several examples for examination. Take a few pages from Richard Bach's *One*, Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, or any other book where the author describes a Christian. Ask students to bring in examples from their reading, and then discuss them in class. Using well-read books by respected authors will provide a more helpful foundation for discussion than if students simply tell what they saw on television last week. Then discuss the readings. "Do these examples reflect what people think of us? Which, if any, are accurate pictures? To what extent are Christians responsible for these misconceptions? How do we address these false images?"

Second, avoid direct attacks. More people probably saw "The Last

Temptation of Christ" to see what all the screaming was about than any other reason. The movie got terrible reviews from secular critiques and probably would have gone largely unnoticed had it not been for all the free advertising by conservative Christians. No statistics exist which will prove this assertion, but examples can easily be produced. If churches, pastors, and professors attack best sellers as being "lies from the devil," sales will increase and the attacker will lose credibility.

Third, assuming you find an example which reflects a commonly held misconception of what it means to be a Christian, use it for a sermon illustration. To keep from sounding too critical, preface your remarks with whatever brief compliments you can give the book. "Carl Sagan did a beautiful job of dealing with an intriguing idea: what would happen if a radio astronomer actually picked up transmissions from another planet? I would recommend the book to any science fiction reader. Sagan is an expert scientist and a good wordsmith; his theology, however, is as bad as my physics..." Don't make up praise you can't stand behind, but do give credit where credit is due. It will only make your negative critique more objective and credible. Show what the author says and where the bible contradicts them. Realize you can destroy your own argument by over-reacting. Dr. Sagan does not merit personal condemnation anymore than Salman Rushdie.

Finally, the cause of Christ may well be aided by quality fiction written by Christians for the secular market. Examples of intelligent, sensitive, "normal" Christians exist in literature and even on television. More need to be written. These books would not need Christian themes for the plots, only a character or two who displays the changes Christ has made in their lives. Subtle messages will be effective, and a welcomed change of pace for many readers. Several seminaries and bible colleges now offer courses in communications and writing. Workshops are offered at Christian Impact (formerly the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity), and the Moody Bible Institute.

Thus, use of popular literature in the evangelism classroom can have several positive benefits. It can show the need for evangelism as commonly held misconceptions are identified, it can aid understanding of culture and people, and it can motivate students to do evangelism.

NOTES

[1]Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Whimsical Christian* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1969), pp. 26-27.

[2]Pat Conroy, *The Prince of Tides: a Novel* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986), pp. 129, 266.

[3]*Ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

[4]Carl Sagan, *Contact* (New York: Pocket Books, 1985), pp. 167-168.

[5]John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: the Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), pp. 190-194.

BOOK NOTES

by

David Lowes Watson

The Pastor-Evangelist in the Parish

By Richard Stoll Armstrong. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990. Pp. 240. Paperback. $14.95.

This is the third book which Richard Stoll Armstrong, Ashenfelter Professor of Ministry and Evangelism at Princeton Theological Seminary, and currently President of the Academy for Evangelism, has devoted to the pastoral ministry of evangelism. His two earlier volumes—*The Pastor as Evangelist* (Westminster, 1984), and *The Pastor-Evangelist in Worship* (Westminster, 1986)—are complemented here by further dimensions of pastoral ministry viewed from an evangelistic perspective: visitation, couseling, discipling, administration, and ministry beyond the congregation.

As we have come to expect from Armstrong, the book is grounded in a solid theology of ministry and evangelism; but just as important, it provides a great deal of first-hand pastoral advice. The author notes in the Preface that his intention is to "talk openly and honestly about what it means to me to do the work of an evangelist and about the challenges and difficulties that oft-quoted exhortation to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:5) presents." Dick Armstrong has done this work, and faced these challenges and difficulties; and accordingly, he writes with much authority.

Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions

By Mary C. Boys. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. 230. Hardcover. $21.95.

Harper's Encyclopedia of Religious Education

Edited by Iris V. Cully and Kendig Brubaker Cully. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990. Pp. xxiii + 717. Hardcover. $34.95.

The distinctions between evangelism and Christian education have long been self-evident to those who teach in these fields. In recent years, however, the connections have become just as clear, and in the collegial climate being fostered (some would say imposed) by the exigencies of institutional Christianity in North America, there are increasing signs of creative cooperation.

Mary Boys provides a very helpful discussion of these issues, first by defining evangelism as "preaching or teaching the Scriptures in such a way as to arouse conversion," and then by surveying the history of its two "closely linked manifestations"— revivalism and evangelicalism—as a way

of grounding Religious, Christian and Catholic Education in their North American cultural context. In so doing, she poses some penetrating questions about the extent to which this same cultural context should be not only the occasion for evangelistic methods, but also a key factor in forming them.

Gabriel Fackre's excellent entry under "Evangelism" would not of course be a sufficient reason to buy the very substantial *Encyclopedia of Religious Education* which Harper and Row have just published. But so many of the other entries are of equal quality, and cover so much indispensible terrain for the evangelist, that acquisition can readily be recommended. "Commitment," "Conversion," "Consciousness-raising," "Eternal Life," "Evangelicalism," "Mission," "Peace, Education for," "Salvation," "Teaching Theory," are but a sampling of what this fine volume has to offer. It is *sine qua non* for teacher and student alike.

"Nothing To Do But To Save Souls." John Wesley's Charge to His Preachers.

By Robert E. Coleman. Foreword by Dennis F. Kinlaw. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Francis Asbury Press (Zondervan), 1990. Pp. 107. Paperback. $5.95.

The prolific pen of Robert Coleman has once again produced a stimulating call to engage in God's mission to the world. Drawing from the evangelistic roots of Methodism, and particularly John Wesley and his early preachers on both sides of the Atlantic, Coleman articulates some basic principles for those who would follow in their footsteps today: a passion for souls, strong committed leadership, an overflow of Christian experience, and a spiritual authority which can come only from a disciplined Christian living in the world—attributes which he finds sadly lacking in much of present-day Methodism.

Especially helpful (and very well researched, given the limitations of a small volume) is Coleman's identification of the essential Christian message which the evangelist must take to the world. God offers salvation in Christ, but there must be human response. Making this choice clear, and calling for decisive commitment, was a ministry which the early Methodists exercised boldly and unequivocally, often at their peril. Coleman's message is likewise clear: While the *evangel* must always be theologically sound, it can never be reduced to theological reflection.

The Word Among Us: Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today

Edited by Dean S. Gilliland. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989. Pp. viii + 344. Paperback. $15.99.

The breadth and the depth of the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary is strikingly displayed in this rich and informative

volume, consisting of chapters by the school's faculty, and edited by the Director of their Cross-Cultural Studies Program. Some of the names are long established in their fields—Arthur Glasser, Paul Hiebert, Charles Kraft, Peter Wagner, for example—but twelve faculty in all have been asked to contribute, making this an innovative as well as a stimulating collection.

All of the important dimensions of contextualization are here: incarnational mission, Old and New Testament hermeneutics (including a very helpful chapter on Covenant by Charles Van Engen), communication, social transformation, leadership, ethics, and interfaith issues. It can be strongly recommended as a classroom text.

Growing an Evangelistic Sunday School

By Ken Hemphill and R. Wayne Jones. Foreword by Delos Miles. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1989. Pp. 176. Paperback. $6.95.

Worship and Evangelism

By Andy Langford and Sally Overby Langford. Pathways to Church Growth. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1989. Pp. xii + 84. Paperback. $7.95.

Here are two very helpful resources for the practice of ministry with evangelistic purpose and perspective. Delos Miles goes so far as to say in his Foreword to the Hemphill and Jones volume that "If you have been looking for the *one* book that combines Sunday School, evangelism and church growth, look no further." Evangelistic training, teaching and assimilation are given very detailed treatment, and underlying the whole book is a sense of the urgency which must impel this task.

Andy and Sally Langford provide a sensitive and practical insight into worship, both as a means of drawing people into the community of the church, and sending them forth into the world to serve the Risen Christ. The authors have a keen understanding of Christian liturgical tradition, which they are able to interpret as a powerful and dynamic means of communicating the gospel to a wide range of persons, within and beyond the church.

Moving the Church into Action

By Kent R. Hunter. Foreword by W. Leroy Biesenthal. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989. Pp. 152. Paperback. $9.95.

This is a very readable and relevant book for those who have become impatient with the reluctance of so many congregations and pastors to accept the realities of their worldly context. The fact of the matter is that many laypersons who function according to well-tried principles in the workplace do not understand why the church cannot come to terms with what it means to function alongside other organizations. Leadership, systems analysis, and incisive questions provide a ready means to give congregations a check-up and a prognosis for dynamic mission in the world.

The Gospel in a Pluralist Society

By Lesslie Newbigin. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Geneva: WCC Publications; 1989. Pp. xi + 244. Paperback. $14.95.

There are two pitfalls to the stated theme of this book, both of them imbued with high motive. The one is to concede the particularity of the gospel for the sake of religious and cultural openness. The other is to imprison the gospel in its particularity for the sake of evangelistic faithfulness. Carl Braaten has long plotted us a theological course between these errors; and now we have a missiological blueprint drawn by an equally firm hand.

Rightly affirming the role of both dogma and doubt in the Christian faith—a faith by definition eschatologically incomplete—Newbigin gives us a series of eloquent dialectical chapters, pursuing the integrity of the Christian pilgrimage in the midst of a genuine pluralism of the Holy Spirit's working in the world, and culminating in the resounding declaration that the congregation is the hermeneutic of the gospel. His theological bearings are sound; his compass headings are sure; and the open horizon of history is therefore trustworthy as the limitless opportunity for mission. It makes all the difference in the world to know from page one that we are in the hands of a well-tried disciple.

Options: How to Develop and Share Christian Faith Today

By Douglas Alan Walrath. New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1988. Pp. xi + 112. Paperback. $8.95.

Witness: Empowering the Church

By A. Grace Wegner and Dave & Neta Jackson. Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1989. Pp. 196. Paperback. $8.95.

These are two very helpful books in equipping for evangelism by the sharing of faith. The volume by Walrath explores the issues of faith development as a means of empowering church members for Christian witness. By questing for the maturity of faith which the first disciples acquired as they walked and talked with Jesus, there comes an assurance in the believer which permits and impels to evangelistic outreach.

In *Witness*, the authors are more concerned to ground evangelism in the congregation, arguing that the sharing of one's personal faith cannot be done in an ecclesial vacuum. Therefore the whole church must be equipped to witness through faithful discipleship, and by understanding the corporate means of evangelism—the family, and other social groupings of the community.

THE ACADEMY FOR EVANGELISM IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Seventeenth Annual Meeting

MINUTES

The seventeenth annual meeting of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education was held on the campus of Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, October 5-7, 1989. The meeting was opened at 7:40 p.m. by President Raymond Bakke with prayer. Academy members introduced themselves. Dr. Bakke introduced Dr. David Tiede, President of Luther Northwestern Seminary, who warmly welcomed the Academy. Dr. Oswald Hoffman, speaker on the Lutheran Hour for thirty-three years, addressed the Academy on "Reflections from My Life as an Evangelist." A positive time of interaction followed. Dr. Hoffman's joy and humor and good news and evident dedication to Christ lifted us all. Bill Pannell dismissed the Thursday evening session with prayer.

On Friday morning Bob Anderson, of Western Baptist Seminary, led devotions on Matthew 8:5-1 and spoke about his seminary's new involvement in training for chaplaincy ministry. Billy Abraham, Perkins School of Theology, gave a paper, "Athens, Aldersgate, and SMU," which dealt with teaching evangelism in the university setting. He recognized two major pressures on the teaching of evangelism: (1) if we make evangelism a place of study, we may lose the practice of evangelism, and (2) if we give too much attention to a critlcal approach to methods, we may lose the theological base for evangelism.

The afternoon session began with Norman Thomas, United Theological Seminary, reporting on the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, WCC, which met in San Antonio in May. His careful analysis of this conference was followed by his conclusion that a psychological barrier has been broken, and we can now talk evangelism in the WCC.

Emmett Johnson, evangelism executive for the American Baptist Church in the U.S.A., reported on the International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne II, which met in Manila in July. He highlighted unreached people emphases, strong social concern, charismatic strength, and the Lausanne movement as a continuing force. Lausanne made the loudest emphasis on sacrifice he had ever heard.

Pete Hendrick, of Austin Presbyterian Seminary, compared and contrasted the two conferences. He said that for Lausanne evangelism is *the*

mission of the church; for San Antonio, evangelism is *a* mission of the church. A positive and stimulating discussion followed.

Friday evening the Academy was hosted for a meal by Dr. David Tiede of Luther Northwestern Seminary. Following the meal, Dr. Ray Bakke delivered the presidential address, "An Evangelism Agenda for the 1990's." He emphasized six areas of emerging need and opportunity: 1) Asianization of the Planet, 2) Islam, 3) Growth of the Vulnerable (People at Risk), 4) Francophone World, 5) Marketplace, and 6) Urban Frontier. Bakke called for creativity and personal sacrifice to meet these needs.

Saturday morning began at 9:05 a.m. with devotions led by Scott Young of IVCF and Fuller Seminary. President Bakke called the business meeting to order. Ron Crandall gave the treasurer's report, and it was approved. Secretary Chic Shaver called attention to the minutes recorded in the back of the Journal. They were approved. Chic Shaver gave the membership report. Accepted into full membership were Arnold Lovell, Del Tarr, Siegfried Schuster, Thom Rainer, T. V. Thomas, Craig Van Gelder, Robert C. Tice, David D'Amico, and Gordon Klenck.

Accepted into associate membership were David Hagstrom, Arnold Stauffer, Alvin Reid, Roger Hedlund, and James Singleton.

Referred to Executive Committee with power to act on membership status were Floyd Babcock and Willard Hartstine.

The honorary membership concept was discussed. It was decided no such status would be granted to other persons at this time.

The Journal was discussed. October 1 was suggested as the target date for each issue. An editorial board was suggested to assist the editor. We were remlnded that the next issue is to be on Black Evangelism, and Bill Pannell will assist in editing. David L. Watson was elected to a two year term with special thanks to David and the circulation editor Marigene Chamberlain. The cost of the *Journal* was raised to $10 a year and $30 for four years. Issues of receiving foreign checks for subscription and dues were referred to the executive committee. Bill Pannell, Billy Abraham, and Scott Young were appointed to the editorial board, and it was ratified. Issues of required payment of dues for the *Journal* and a promotional campaign were referred to the Journal Committee.

It was urged that AETE members and friends be notified of the meeting dates for the next two years. Notice is to be given of the dues requirements. Names of AETE members shall be published in the Journal.

Future meetings were discussed. The concept of geographical spread was explained, alternating between main line and evangelical schools. Bakke suggested October 4-6, 1990 in New Orleans at New Orleans Baptist Seminary, Oct. 10-12, 1991 - Fresno, 1992 - East Coast, and 1993 - Canada. This was approved. Plans for assistance in expensive airline fares were discussed. Henry Schmidt's invitation to the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California for 1991 was accepted.

Program ideas were discussed. The executive committee shall deal with the possibilities of raising a program committee. Milton Rudnick suggested that host institutions be encouraged to invite their faculties to a portion of the AETE meetings. David Hester suggested that program ideas

should be relayed to the executive committee. George Hunter urged a serious and critical dealing with Black Evangelism and not just inspiration. Dick Peace suggested Fresno should deal with encountering new religious movements. Billy Abraham raised the topic of encountering other religious traditions. Rudnick raised the issue of how to excite a whole seminary student body to evangelism.

Constitutional changes were presented by Chic Shaver. All were approved. The revised constitution is to be sent to all members as soon as possible.

Ray Bakke raised Milton Rudnick's idea of a yearly award (Distinguished Evangelism Award). He raised Billy Abraham's idea of a theme for the year. A book and course could be built around it and organizations could be encouraged to fund such. Milton Rudnick suggested a task force to seminary leadership to encourage them to evangelism emphasis in their schools. At this point Bakke suggested the increase of institutional fees to $100 per year. George Hunter urged that we not just center on one theme, but keep diversified.

The executive committee suggested the following names for officers for 1989-1991.

President - Richard Armstrong
Vice-President - Robert Anderson
Treasurer - Ron Crandall

The floor was opened for other nominations. Nominations were closed and Armstrong, Anderson, and Crandall were voted in by acclamation. The ballot was declared unanimous.

A letter of thanks was ordered to Dr. Tiede. Dick Peace reported on the syllabus publication project. The project has been sent to World Vision for printing. Distribution shall be to seminaries, denominational evangelism executives, and Academy members.

George Hunsburger told of a cluster of leaders that share reflections and ideas in a newsletter. We could be on the mailing list. George Hunter raised issue of "Reevangelizing of the West." Seminary officers could be invited to this. Bakke announced the International Urban Congress April 2-6, 1991 in Chicago. Students can apply to SCUPE, 30 West Chicago, Chicago, IL 60610. A Research meeting shall precede and a Missionary Education conference shall follow the Congress.

Scott Young reported on results of his work in consultation with Roman Catholics. Dick Armstrong expressed our special thanks to Ray Bakke for his leadership and all joined in acclaim. Renea Gerbold was thanked for her tremendous work.

Woody Davis reported on his computer network research. He urged us to link up with BITNET. Woody is trying to establish a religious informaiton hotline. It was agreed we would give Woody our mailing list.

President Bakke adjourned our meeting at about noon.

Respectfully submitted
Chic Shaver
Secretary

JOURNAL OF THE ACADEMY FOR EVANGELISM IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Index for Volumes 1-4 (1985-89)

ARTICLES

CASE STUDIES

AUTHORS OF ARTICLES AND CASE STUDIES

BOOKS REVIEWED

BOOKS NOTED

REVIEWERS

MINUTES OF THE ACADEMY

The Eighteenth Annual Meeting

The Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the Academy will be held at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana, on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, October 4th, 5th and 6th, 1990.

William E. Pannell of Fuller Theological Seminary, a Past President of the Academy, will present the keynote address on Thursday evening, "Evangelism and the African American." This will be followed by a panel discussion, which will also include The Rev. James M. Capers, Director of Evangelism Outreach for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The sessions on Friday will feature an address by Milton L. Rudnick, Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton, Canada, with responses by David Hester and Jerald Reed; and a Master Class in Evangelism, presented by H. Stanley Wood, "Equipping Denominations for Evangelism and New Church Development." The annual banquet will be on Friday evening, hosted by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Landrum P. Leavell, President. The banquet address will be given by Billy Warren, followed by a Lecture and Piano Recital by Corean Bakke.

On Saturday morning, the Academy will conduct its business and hear further reports from members.

The Nineteenth Annual Meeting

PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT

The Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the Academy will be held at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California, on October 10th, 11th and 12th, 1991. Host member will be Henry J. Schmidt.