

JOURNAL OF THE  
ACADEMY FOR  
EVANGELISM IN  
THEOLOGICAL  
EDUCATION

Volume Four  
1988-1989

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## JOURNAL OF THE ACADEMY FOR EVANGELISM IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

### Volume Four 1988-89

#### Editorial Introduction

David Lowes Watson

#### ARTICLES

*Comprehensive and Contextual:  
The Evangelism of Orlando Costas*

Priscilla Pope-Levison page 4

*"The Great Commission": Mission as Discipleship*

Mortimer Arias page 15

*The Nature and Function of the  
Catholic Parish Mission*

Patrick J. Sena page 33

*A People Who Belong*

Richard Stoll Armstrong page 39

*Evangelism in the North American Context*

Charles Van Engen page 45

*The Cursillo/Walk to Emmaus Movement:  
An Apostolic Model*

Ronald K. Crandall page 56

*Truth, Method and Evangelism*

Thomas H. McAlpine page 66

## BOOK REVIEWS

page 80

Thom S. Rainer, *Evangelism in the Twenty-First Century*

Richard V. Peace

Daniel L. Buttry, *Bringing Your Church Back to Life*

Robert L. Bast

Christopher C. Walker, *Connecting With the Spirit of Christ*

William J. Abraham

Robert E. Coleman, *The Spark That Ignites*

Donald P. Buteyn

William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism*

David Lowes Watson

## BOOK NOTES

page 88

## SIXTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ACADEMY

*Minutes of the Meeting*

page 94

# JOURNAL OF THE ACADEMY FOR EVANGELISM IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

## Index for Volumes 1-4 (1985-89)

### ARTICLES

A People Who Belong

by Richard Stoll Armstrong, 4:39-44.

Christ Has Died, Christ Is Risen, Christ Will Come Again:  
Toward a Liturgical Evangelism

by Joe G. Burnett, 1:46-58.

Church Growth Theory and the Future of Evangelism

by William J. Abraham, 2:20-30.

Comprehensive and Contextual: The Evangelism of  
Orlando Costas

by Priscilla Pope-Levison, 4:4-14.

Evangelism and Social Involvement: The Right Question  
for the North American Church

by Dan E. Bonner, Jr., 3:72-74.

Evangelism and the Theological Curriculum

by Jim L. Waits, 3:41-45.

Evangelism in the North American Context

by Charles Van Engen, 4:45-55.

George E. Sweazey: A Tribute

by Richard Stoll Armstrong, 1:6-8.

God vs Idols: A Model of Conversion

by Charles R. Taber, 3:20-32.

Holistic Evangelism: The Legacy of E. Stanley Jones

by Mortimer Arias, 2:5-19.

Men and the Church: What keeps them out and what  
brings them in

by Woody L. Davis, 3:46-61.

Presbyterians and Ethnic Evangelism

by John R. Hendrick, 1:22-35.

**Some Reflections on Church Growth**

by William E. Pannell, 2:53-59.

**The Cursillo/Walk to Emmaus Movement: An Apostolic Model**

by Ronald K. Crandall, 4:56-65.

**"The Great Commission": Mission as Discipleship**

by Mortimer Arias, 4:15-32.

**The Meaning of Evangelism in the Context of God's Universal Grace**

by Carl E. Braaten, 3:9-19.

**The Nature and Function of the Catholic Parish Mission**

by Patrick J. Sena, 4:33-38.

**The New Media Environment: Evangelism in a Visually-Oriented Society**

by Richard V. Peace, 1:36-45.

**Theological Issues in Church Growth**

by Eddie Gibbs, 2:31-37.

**The Task of Evangelism**

by Jimmy Carter, 3:5-8.

**Thirteenth Annual Meeting Banquet Address**

by George E. Sweazey, 1:91-94.

**Truth, Method and Evangelism**

by Thomas H. McAlpine, 4:66-79.

**Urban Evangelization: A Lausanne Strategy Since 1980**

by Raymond J. Bakke, 1:9-21.

**What kind of Christian do we seek to make through Evangelism?**

by Francis E. Ringer, 3:33-40.

**Where is "Church Growth" in North America Today?**

by George G. Hunter III, 2:38-52.

**CASE STUDIES****A Goal-Directed Model for Disciple-Making**

by Samuel R. Schutz, 3:62-71.

**Cross-Cultural Evangelism: A Case Study in New Mexico**

by Bert Affleck, 2:60-78.

**Evangelism Explosion on Trial at First Church**

by Norman E. Thomas, 1:72-80.

**Personal Piety and Social Action: A Case Study in Zimbabwe**

by Norman E. Thomas, 1:59-71.

**AUTHORS OF ARTICLES AND CASE STUDIES****Abraham, William J.**

Church Growth Theory and the Future of Evangelism, 2:20-30.

**Affleck, Bert**

Cross-Cultural Evangelism: A Case Study of New Mexico, 2:60-78.

**Arias, Mortimer**

Holistic Evangelism: The Legacy of E. Stanley Jones, 2:5-19.

**Arias, Mortimer**

"The Great Commission": Mission on Discipleship, 4:15-32.

**Armstrong, Richard Stoll**

George E. Sweazey: A Tribute, 1:6-8.

**Armstrong, Richard Stoll**

A People Who Belong, 4:39-44.

**Bakke, Raymond J.**

Urban Evangelization: A Lausanne Strategy Since 1980, 1:9-21.

**Bonner, Dan E., Jr.**

Evangelism and Social Involvement: The Right Question for the North American Church, 3:72-74.

**Braaten, Carl E.**

The Meaning of Evangelism in the Context of God's Universal Grace, 3:9-19.

**Burnett, Joe G.**

Christ Has Died, Christ Is Risen, Christ Will Come Again: Toward a Liturgical Evangelism, 1:46-58.

**Carter, Jimmy**

The Task of Evangelism, 3:5-8.

**Crandall, Ronald K.**

The Cursillo/Walk to Emmaus Movement: An Apostolic Model, 4:56-65.

**Davis, Woody L.**

Men and the Church: What keeps them out and what brings them in, 3:46-61.

Gibbs, Eddie

Theological Issues in Church Growth, 2:31-37.

Hendrick, John R.

Presbyterians and Ethnic Evangelism, 1:22-35.

Hunter, George G. III

Where is "Church Growth" in North America Today? 2:38-52.

McAlpine, Thomas H.

Truth, Method and Evangelism, 4:66-79.

Pannell, William E.

Some Reflections on Church Growth, 2:53-59.

Peace, Richard V.

The New Media Environment: Evangelism in a Visually-Oriented Society, 1:36-45.

Pope-Levison, Priscilla

Comprehensive and Contextual: The Evangelism of Orlando Costas, 4:4-14.

Ringer, Francis E.

What kind of Christian do we seek to make through Evangelism? 3:33-40.

Schutz, Samuel R.

A Goal-Directed Model for Disciple-Making, 3:62-71.

Sena, Patrick J.

The Nature and Function of the Catholic Parish Mission, 4:33-38.

Sweazey, George E.

Thirteenth Annual Meeting Banquet Address, 1:91-94.

Taber, Charles R.

God vs Idols: A Model of Conversion, 3:20-32.

Thomas, Norman E.

Evangelism Explosion on Trial at First Church, 1:72-80.

Thomas, Norman E.

Personal Piety and Social Action: A Case Study in Zimbabwe, 1:59-71.

Van Engen, Charles

Evangelism in the North American Context, 4:45-55.

Waits, Jim L.

Evangelism and the Theological Curriculum, 3:41-45.

## BOOKS REVIEWED

Abraham, William J., *The Logic of Evangelism*, 4:86-88.

Arias, Mortimer, *Announcing the Reign of God*, 1:81-82.

Armstrong, Richard Stoll, *The Pastor as Evangelist*, 1:83-84.

Buttry, Daniel L., *Bringing Your Church Back to Life*, 4:81-82.

Coleman, Robert E., *The Spark That Ignites*, 4:85-86.

Hunter, George G. III, *To Spread the Power*, 3:75-76.

Johnson, Ben Campbell, *Rethinking Evangelism*, 3:77-78.

Kolb, Robert, *Speaking the Gospel Today*, 1:85-86.

Lindsell, Harold, *The New Paganism*, 3:79-80.

Miles, Delos, *Evangelism and Social Involvement*, 3:72-74.

Miles, Delos, *Overcoming Barriers to Witnessing*, 1:87-88.

Peace, Richard V., *Small Group Evangelism*, 2:81-82.

Rainer, Thom S., ed., *Evangelism in the 21st Century*, 4:80-81.

Rudnick, Milton L., *Speaking the Gospel Through the Ages*, 1:89-90.

Schweer, G. William, *Personal Evangelism for Today*, 2:85.

Tuttle, Robert G., Jr., *On Giant Shoulders*, 2:83-84.

Walker, Christopher C., *Connecting with the Spirit of Christ*, 4:83-84.

Webber, Robert E., *Celebrating Our Faith*, 2:79-80.

## BOOKS NOTED

Anderson, James D., and Jones, Ezra Earl, *Ministry of the Laity*, 2:86-87.

Armstrong, Richard Stoll, *Faithful Witnesses*, 3:81.

Armstrong, Richard Stoll, *The Pastor-Evangelist in Worship*, 2:87.

Baehr, Theodore, *Getting the Word Out*, 3:82.

Bakke, Raymond J., and Roberts, Samuel K., *The Expanded Mission of Old 'First Churches'*, 2:87-88.

Bakke, Raymond J., with Hart, Jim, *The Urban Christian*, 3:83.

Barrett, David B., *Evangelize: A Historical Survey*, 3:84.

Barrett, David B., *Cosmos, Chaos and Gospel*, 3:84-85.

- Barrett, David B., *World-Class Cities and World Evangelization*, 4:88
- Birkey, Del, *The House Church*, 4:88.
- Coleman, Robert E., ed., *Evangelism on the Cutting Edge*, 3:86
- Coleman, Robert E., *The Master Plan of Discipleship*, 3:86.
- Conn, Harvie M., *A Clarified Vision for Urban Mission*, 2:88.
- Conn, Walter E., *Christian Conversion*, 2:88-89.
- Coppedge, Allan, *The Biblical Principles of Discipleship*, 4:89.
- Costas, Orlando E., *Liberating News*, 4:89.
- Cunningham, Richard B., *The Christian Faith and Its Contemporary Rivals*, 4:89.
- Dart, John, *The Jesus of Heresy and History*, 4:89-90.
- Dibbert, Michael T., *Spiritual Leadership*, 4:90.
- Doohan, Leonard, *Laity's Mission in the Local Church*, 2:86.
- Eller, Vernard, *Proclaim Glad Tidings*, 2:90.
- Ellul, Jacques, *The Subversion of Christianity*, 3:87.
- Finley, Dean, comp., *Handbook for Youth Evangelism*, 3:88.
- Fox, H. Eddie, and Morris, George E., *Faith-Sharing*, 2:90.
- Gonzalez, Justo L., *Christian Thought Revisited*, 4:90.
- Happel, Steven, and Walter, James J., *Conversion and Discipleship*, 2:88-89.
- Harrell, David Edwin, Jr., *Pat Robertson: A Portrait*, 3:88-89.
- König, Adrio, *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology*, 4:90.
- Kraus, C. Norman, *The Authentic Witness*, 2:91.
- Lewis, Larry L., *Organize to Evangelize*, 4:91.
- May, Gerald B., *Addiction and Grace*, 4:91.
- McGavran, Donald A., *Effective Evangelism*, 3:89.
- McGrath, Alister E., *Explaining Your Faith Without Losing Your Friends*, 4:91.
- Newbigin, Lesslie, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 2:91.
- Nicholls, Bruce J., ed., *In Word and Deed*, 2:92.
- Parks, R. Keith, *World in View*, 4:91-92.
- Prior, David, *Parish Renewal at the Grassroots*, 2:92.

- Rahner, Karl, and Lapide, Pinchas, *Encountering Jesus—Encountering Judaism*, 4:92.
- Schmidt, Henry J., ed., *Witnesses of a Third Way*, 2:93.
- Schreck, Harley, and Barrett, David, eds., *Unreached Peoples*, 3:90.
- Shenk, David W., and Stutzman, Ervin R., *Creating Communities of the Kingdom*, 4:92.
- Snyder, Howard A., *A Kingdom Manifesto*, 2:93.
- Snyder, Howard A., *Signs of the Spirit*, 4:92-93.
- Springer, Kevin, ed., and Wimber, John, *Power Encounters Among Christians in the Western World*, 4:93.
- Tucker, Ruth A., *Guardians of the Great Commission*, 4:93.
- Turner, Gordon Bruce, *Outside Looking In*, 3:91.
- Wagner, C. Peter, *Strategies for Church Growth*, 3:92.
- Wallis, Jim, *The Rise of Christian Conscience*, 2:94.
- Wimber, John, with Springer, Kevin, *Power Evangelism*, 2:94.
- Wimberley, Edward P. and Anne Streaty, *Liberation and Human Wholeness*, 3:93-94.

## REVIEWERS

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Abraham, William J., 4:83-84.                   | Cummings, Sudduth Rea, 1:85-86. |
| Albin, Thomas R., 3:75-76.                      | Drummond, Lewis A., 1:89-90.    |
| Baker, Vaughn W., 2:81-82.                      | Morris, George E., 1:81-82.     |
| Bakke, Raymond J., 2:85.                        | Peace, Richard V., 4:80-81      |
| Bast, Robert L., 4:81-83.                       | Ringer, Francis E., 3:77-78.    |
| Bonner, Dan E., Jr., 3:72-74.                   | Schweer, G. William, 3:79-80.   |
| Buteyn, Donald P., 4:85-86.                     | Sena, Patrick J., 2:79-80.      |
| Chamberlain, Marigene, 4:88-93.                 | Thomas, Norman E., 1:83-84.     |
| Crandall, Ronald K., 2:83-84.                   | Wainwright, Robin W., 1:87-88.  |
| Watson, David Lowes, 2:86-94; 3:81-94, 4:86-88. |                                 |

## MINUTES OF THE ACADEMY

Thirteenth Annual Meeting, October 10-12, 1985, 1:95-96.

Fourteenth Annual Meeting, October 10-12, 1986, 2:95-96.

Fifteenth Annual Meeting, October 7-9, 1987, 3:95-96.

Sixteenth Annual Meeting, October 6-8, 1988, 4:94-96.

## Editorial Introduction

The theological academy as a whole, and those of us in the disciplines of evangelism and missiology in particular, were deeply saddened by the untimely death in 1987 of Orlando E. Costas, Dean of Andover Newton Theological School. His writings had long established him as a leader in these fields, and his last volume, recently published posthumously, is listed in the Book Notes of this issue of the *Journal*. But he will be remembered just as much for his collegiality and true friendship in the task of witnessing to the gospel of Jesus Christ. He has already been mourned by his native Puerto Rico, his colleagues in the Latin American ecumenical community, and by his former students world-wide. The Academy for Evangelism adds its tribute in the opening article by Priscilla Pope-Levison who, as one of the most promising younger scholars in the field, continues the evangelical tradition to which Orlando Costas gave so much of his life.

Following this is a major article by Mortimer Arias, newly appointed as Professor of Evangelism at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado. Readers of the *Journal* will remember his fine account of the life and work of E. Stanley Jones (Volume Two, 1986-87). Colleagues in the Academy will welcome his return to this country after a number of years as President of the Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano in Costa Rica. His scholarship brings international distinction to our work.

The remaining articles in this issue are rich and varied. Patrick J. Sena, in his banquet address to the sixteenth meeting of the Academy, presents a well-trying model for evangelism through Roman Catholic parish renewal, including some significant dimensions of corporate repentance which Protestants would do well to note. Richard Stoll Armstrong, in addressing Asian Christians in this country, provides a salutary reminder to the rest of us that Christian witness has obligations as well as benefits, a point which Charles Van Engen affirms with a series of incisive contextual questions for North American congregations. Ronald K. Crandall describes the origins and purpose of *Cursillo*, also known as the *Walk to Emmaus*, a rapidly growing spiritual movement in the church. And Thomas H. McAlpine gives us some insights to complement the excellent book display he and George Rice put together for last year's meeting.

This issue marks the fulfillment of the undertaking made in 1983 to launch a journal for the Academy on a four-year trial basis. With gratitude to the members, and a deep sense of God's grace at work throughout the entire project, it can now be stated that the *Journal* is to continue as an annual publication. And for those whose contributions have made the first four issues a reality, a modicum of satisfaction would not be inappropriate.

# COMPREHENSIVE AND CONTEXTUAL

## The Evangelism of Orlando Costas

Priscilla Pope-Levison

### Introduction

Orlando Costas has left to us a rich legacy of writings, models, and strategies for evangelism. His evangelism spanned many frontiers—North America and Latin America, seminaries and the grassroots, evangelical and ecumenical circles. Despite these various contexts, it is the North American church who can potentially profit the most from his evangelism. As one who was on the North American periphery, culturally and socially, an Hispanic in the United States, Costas raised a prophetic voice in response to the North American approach to evangelism. In this regard, the driving goal of his later years and the reason for his return to the United States from Central America was to be a voice calling for a two-way evangelism: from the North American church to cultural and ethnic groups within its borders; and from these cultural groups to the North American church. His vision of a reciprocal evangelism provides a necessary critique from the vantage point of those on the margins in the world.

For a long time Christians and churches in mainstream society have seen their brothers and sisters in the minority church as a mission station, or at best an interesting ecclesial nucleus that does things differently. In the 1980s, however, they are having to learn from them what it means to bear a joyous and lively witness to a messianic order of life. Indeed, by and large it is the church of American minorities that is not only growing numerically by leaps and bounds and has been enjoying a continuous process of evangelistic mobilization but, more important, is the one nucleus of American Christianity that has *experienced* the gospel as life and joy in an environment of death and misery. This is, therefore, that prophetic unit that is best able to teach mainstream Christians, denominations,

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and local churches how to evangelize in the 1980s. It is my sincere conviction that, . . . if and when their churches begin to follow in the footsteps of minority churches and apply their model of evangelization to the concrete situation of mainstream society, there will be a transformation in the personal and collective lives of women, men, and children such as the United States has never known.<sup>1</sup>

Two words outline Costas' understanding of evangelism: *contextual* and *comprehensive*. By focusing on these words, the fullness of his evangelism is illuminated. However, contextual and comprehensive not only describe his evangelism; they also describe his person. In several autobiographical sketches, he reflected about the influence of the Latin American context and about the comprehensive nature of his life—living in two cultures and being an evangelical committed to liberation. This article will focus on his understanding of evangelism as contextual and comprehensive, and in so doing, we hope to capture a glimpse of Orlando Costas the person in his context and his comprehensiveness.

### Contextual Evangelism

Both Costas and his evangelism were contextual, and the context which shaped them was Latin America. He expressed the importance of the Latin American context in these words: "I write as a Latin American evangelical. This means that behind my reflection the reader ought to bear in mind the situation of oppression and repression, imperialism and colonialism, starvation and poverty, power and powerlessness, frustration and despair which characterize Latin American society today."<sup>2</sup>

He defined context as ". . . all the baggage people bring with them when they share and interpret reality to one another, but also to the situation wherein they reflect upon their practice . . . reality in all its dynamics."<sup>3</sup> Contextualization in evangelism occurs when the context is actively brought into the evangelistic process. In other words, even though the context always exists, contextualization occurs when it is purposively incorporated. Contextual evangelism blends the particular situation, its value system, predominant ideologies, social setting, culture, resistance to the Gospel, prevailing problems and issues, political and economic situation, and other like features into the gospel message.

All too frequently, in Costas' opinion, evangelism declares a universal message which suffices for every situation and for all persons. In contrast to this, contextual evangelism addresses real people of flesh and blood who are historically situated. They are not faceless targets in a universal vacuum, but people of a context. If evangelism does not address their particular context, if it is made universally applicable, then it is meaningless, and it fails to register or to transform. Instead, Costas desired a contextual evangelism which would immerse itself in the context of the people, thus preventing an abstract, a-historical message.

The necessity of contextual evangelism is well accepted among Latin Americans' writing on evangelism. Like Costas, Mortimer Arias proposes that contextual evangelism take seriously the people who are being evangelized and their actual situation. The incarnation of Jesus Christ serves as the biblical model of contextualization for Arias. Just as Jesus had an historical, social, cultural, political, and religious context, so must evangelism. In "A Bolivian Manifesto on Evangelism in Latin America Today," issued by the Bolivian Methodist Church in 1974 while Arias was bishop, the word, "incarnate" is synonymous with contextual. "True evangelism is *incarnateo*: proclamation in words and deeds in a concrete situation. The Gospel is eternal, but not a-temporal or a-historical. It addresses itself to the whole man in his context."<sup>4</sup> José Míguez Bonino, too, calls for consideration of the context with an emphasis on the importance of historicity. In order to be meaningful, the evangelistic announcement must be historically accurate, i.e., pertinent to the times and the particular situation.

The fear for these three writers is that, without incorporation of the concrete situation, evangelism will consist of one message proclaimed repeatedly without reference to the principles of contextualization. As Costas explained, such a universalization is not effective evangelism.

One of the key problems with evangelistic programming (in our region and elsewhere) is that churches fail to take into account the concrete issues and circumstances of those they set out to evangelize. They announce an abstract gospel to an abstract person in an abstract state of sin. The result is an evangelistic event that not only does not cause any offense, but that brings about little *effective* change!<sup>5</sup>

For these writers, effective change is possible through contextual evangelism.

Costas did not remain within the pack on the issue of contextual evangelism. In his 1985 Strachan lectures at the Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano in San José, Costa Rica, he took a significant step away from the others. Instead of simply integrating context into evangelism, no matter what that context is, he immersed evangelism into a specific context—the periphery. Contextual evangelism was no longer concerned with any and all contexts but solely with the "presentation of the gospel from the periphery."<sup>6</sup> The periphery can be defined as the margins or the outskirts of a society. People who live on the periphery are "victims par excellence of a history of egoism, injustice, greed, alienation and despair that has tragically characterized humanity. . . ."<sup>7</sup> In Latin America and elsewhere, these people on the periphery are native peoples, racial minorities, exiles, unemployed, refugees and undocumented immigrants, prostitutes, alcoholics, drug addicts, prisoners, elderly, women and youth.<sup>8</sup> It is among these persons that contextual evangelism is located.

The reasons for the location of contextual evangelism at the periphery are several. One is credibility. Only at the periphery can evangelism retain

its power and its liberating message. Only at the periphery does the message of God's reign as peace, justice, and liberation have real meaning. As he explained, "It is when the gospel makes 'somebody' out of the 'no-bodies' of society, when it restores the self-worth of the marginated, when it enables the oppressed to have a reason for hope, when it empowers the poor to struggle and suffer for liberation and peace, that it is truly good news of a new order of life—the saving power of God. (Rom. 1:16)"<sup>9</sup> Considering the alternative, starting with those in control as opposed to the periphery, evangelism is easily accommodated to the interests of the powerful. The result is an individualized, easy gospel which is greatly hindered from its liberating potential.

When evangelism begins at the center of power, working from the top down, its content ends up being an easy and cheap accommodation to the vested interests of the powerful. Certainly evangelism suffers a reduction which truncates the content of the gospel in order to make it a privatistic whitewash. It becomes a manipulated message in order to assuage the conscience of those who, in virtue of their positions of power (economic, social, political or cultural), control the destiny of those who have been condemned to the margins of society. An evangelism that is directed in the first place to the 'elites' of the society will end up being absorbed by the system.<sup>10</sup>

A second reason for Costas' contextual evangelism is that it is on the periphery where the multitudes live. The multitudes are the majority of the people in the world, and their need is by far the greatest. Because of these factors, the multitudes warrant priority in contextual evangelism.

A third reason is that it is biblical. Two biblical examples informed his thinking on contextual evangelism: from the Old Testament, Esther; and from the New Testament, Jesus. Esther was a prime example of a person on the periphery. She belonged to the periphery in several ways: she was a female, an orphan, and a Jewess. However, she was able to leave the periphery, because of her beauty, to become the Queen to King Ahasuerus. Despite her high rank, she chose to return to the periphery in order to deliver her people who themselves were on the periphery as captive people under subjection to the Persian empire. In preparation for prayer and fasting on behalf of her people, she is described as removing her queenly attire and becoming as one on the periphery. "Taking off her splendid garments, she put on garments of distress and mourning. In place of her precious ointments she covered her head with dirt and ashes. She afflicted her body severely; all her festive adornments were put aside, and her hair was wholly disheveled" (The Additions to the Book of Esther in the Apocrypha 14:1-2). In this way she joined the Jews, those on the periphery, who were also fasting and weeping and "sleeping on sackcloth and ashes" (Esther 4:3).<sup>11</sup> Her "subversive memory" is an example for those on the periphery.<sup>12</sup>

Jesus, too, evangelized on the periphery throughout his Galilean ministry. Galilee was a place on the periphery. According to the opinion of the powerful Jews in Jerusalem, Galilean Jews were considered impure due to their close contact with the Gentiles who inhabited the region, and their theology was labeled unorthodox. Even the accent of the Galilean Jews set them apart.<sup>13</sup>

Yet it was precisely in Galilee, on the periphery, that Jesus began and developed his ministry, and where he spent a significant amount of time. Even more, it was in Galilee that Jesus' evangelizing mission moved to the nations. When the resurrected Jesus appeared to the disciples and charged them to go forth to the ends of the earth, he was in Galilee. Thus, as Costas wrote, "Galilee, the point of departure for the mission of Jesus Christ also became the place of arrival and the launching pad for the proclamation of the gospel in all the world to all the nations. . ."<sup>14</sup>

For Costas, Galilee becomes the universal example for contextual evangelism. Contextual evangelism must always begin on the periphery, among the marginalized as exemplified by Jesus and Esther, and then move to the nations. In this way, the particular—Galilee—becomes the universal.<sup>15</sup>

To summarize, contextual evangelism, for many evangelists, takes seriously the concrete, historical context. But for Costas, the context for evangelism is the periphery. On the periphery contextual evangelism is done among the poor and the marginalized. On the periphery the evangelistic message retains its liberative power and credibility. On the periphery, Jesus is present.

This development in Costas' thinking may have been the result of his participation as an adviser to the Melbourne Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches in 1980. At that meeting, reference was made to Jesus' ministry and life on the periphery.

. . . we have been led to study the significance of the crucifixion of Jesus outside the city wall. We see this as a sign, consistent with much else in his life, that he who is the centre is constantly in movement from the centre towards the periphery, towards those who are marginalized, victims of the demonic powers, political, economic, social, cultural and even—or especially—religious. If we take this model seriously, we find that we must be with Jesus at the periphery, on the margins of society, for his priorities were clear.<sup>16</sup>

This theme is used in his sermon, "Outside the Gate," included in the volume of the same title.

## Comprehensive Evangelism

The second word which describes both the person and the evangelism of Orlando Costas is comprehensive. Costas certainly was a comprehen-

sive person. He bridged two cultures, North American and Latin American. He bridged the ecumenical and evangelical gap. And he bridged an evangelical faith and a liberating praxis. In this last respect he wrote that he was ". . . concerned with the whole problem . . . how to be an evangelical both in heart and theology, an evangelist, and at the same time to be committed to the liberation . . . of our continent from oppressive and domesticating forces."<sup>17</sup>

This juxtaposition of an evangelical faith with a liberating praxis, was the mark of Costas' comprehensive evangelism. Evangelizers are to be persons who embody this comprehensiveness. First of all, they must be persons of faith who are transformed in Jesus Christ. This transformation consists of having experienced "the grace of God, pardon, restitution and liberation for service."<sup>18</sup> Secondly they are to have a liberating praxis in order to be agents of transformation. As agents of transformation, evangelizers are committed to participation in positive, liberating changes in their historical context. Being an agent of transformation is not an option for the evangelizer; it is the way he/she builds credentials in liberating praxis.<sup>19</sup>

Esther is an example of an evangelizer who was an agent of transformation. Costas stated that in the Old Testament authentic evangelism consisted of a declaration of God's liberating work on behalf of God's people and the establishment of a new order.<sup>20</sup> The quintessential evangelistic passage in the Old Testament, according to Costas, is Isaiah 52:7-9 which reads, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'" Esther fulfilled this declaration not only with verbal proclamation but also with action. As an agent of transformation, she helped to bring about God's liberation and God's new order by plotting and pestering King Ahasuerus until the deliverance of her people was assured.

She presents evangelism as a contextual testimony that announces, by means of a prophetic act, good news of peace, who publishes salvation, and who declares that the God of the covenant, providence and redemption, reigns. To evangelize in this perspective implies to live in obedience to the reign, in such a way that we are agents of transformation in our respective situations.<sup>21</sup>

What Esther did was to unite the evangelistic proclamation with action. Costas concurred; proclamation must be worked out in action. Proclamation declares the good news of Jesus Christ and his victory over sin and the good news of the reign of God. These two pronouncements are customary in any presentation of the gospel message. For Costas, however, there was a third part of the pronouncement often neglected—the good news of liberation. He viewed the gospel as a cry of liberty.<sup>22</sup> It is a cry of liberty for the present and the forgiveness of sins available now. At the same time, it is a cry of liberty for the future and the coming of the

reign of God to establish justice, peace, and salvation. Further, it is a cry of liberty which must result in deeds of liberation. In this way, proclaiming the good news of liberation is a form of action if, and only if, the proclamation becomes a reality in liberating actions.<sup>23</sup> Such liberating actions might include "participation in the human struggles against economic and political imperialism, mental and physical infirmities, the ills of ignorance, poverty and hunger and of racial and sexual discrimination."<sup>24</sup> In this way, action brings about that which proclamation announces.

These thoughts on comprehensive evangelism arose from Costas' own experience in which he recognized the link between faith and praxis, between proclamation and action. While he was a pastor in Milwaukee, he experienced a third conversion, a conversion of a sociopolitical character. (His previous conversions were a conversion to Christ and a conversion to his culture.) He wrote the following about his Milwaukee experience:

My political praxis in Milwaukee never supplanted my pastoral and Christian identity. Rather, it brought me to reflect critically on my ministry and the nature and mission of the church; it permitted me to discover the world of the poor and the oppressed as the fundamental reference of the Gospel. I came to recognize that the Christian mission has not only the personal, spiritual and cultural dimensions, but also the social, economic and political. This implied that the object of mission was not the community of faith, but the world in its complexity and concreteness, and that one of my principal pastoral responsibilities was to mobilize the church for an *integral, liberating praxis*.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, he came to believe that in comprehensive evangelism, faith and liberating praxis are joined. Evangelizers who are transformed in Jesus Christ become agents of transformation.

Costas' evangelism was also comprehensive in another way; it included individuals *and* society with its institutions and structures.<sup>26</sup> Institutions and structures exist within any given context, and individuals participate in and perpetuate them. Because of this, evangelism needs to be comprehensive and address both individuals and societal structures. Costas demonstrated this comprehensiveness in three parts of the evangelistic process: proclamation, call to conversion, and denunciation.

Proclamation announces the availability of salvation through Jesus Christ. Salvation is manifested in God's reconciliation of "all things" in Christ. In quoting this Pauline phrase, Costas took the opportunity to explicate the comprehensive of 'all things' with these words: "... I don't think that he [Paul] was speaking in geographical terms. I don't think either that he was referring exclusively to everyone as individuals. . . . The reconciling message of the gospel, then, is directed as much to the individual as to the social structures that form the context of their daily interaction."<sup>27</sup> Thus, the proclamation of salvation, God's reconciliation of everything, is directed towards individuals and structures and institutions. Without

the proclamation of the good news to institutions and structures, the efficacy of evangelism is greatly reduced.<sup>28</sup>

Comprehensive evangelism is also present in the call to conversion. Costas stated that conversion requires a turning away from personal sins *and* a turning away "from alliances with the oppressive structures of this world."<sup>29</sup> Involvement in sinful structures undermines the integrity of the evangelizer. Because of this, he exhorted that there be consistency and authenticity between the message and the lifestyle of the evangelist. For example, an evangelizer who proclaims the good news of the gospel without being fully liberated from sin, including structural sin, undermines the gospel and mitigates its effectiveness. He stated, "This implies that it is impossible to bring good news of salvation in a poor and oppressed continent if one is allied to structures that disregard life and perpetuate injustice . . . It would mean sharing the liberating message of the gospel with one hand and justifying domination and exploitation with the other."<sup>30</sup> In this way, in comprehensive evangelism, sins of the individual and sins in the structural realm are recognized. A comprehensive evangelism leads to a comprehensive conversion.

Likewise, in comprehensive evangelism, denunciation of evils includes both the individual and societal structures. For too long the domain of denunciation has been to condemn individual ethics, such as the evils of liquor, tobacco, drugs and prostitution.<sup>31</sup> Limiting denunciation to personal evils restrains its powerful potential. Instead, denunciation should be prophetic and target structural evils, such as "the absolutist pretensions of the large military and political oligarchies . . . the unmasking of economic exploitation . . . and the awakening of the conscience of millions of Latin Americans who live as prisoners in ignorance."<sup>32</sup>

Costas' comprehensive evangelism brings together aspects of evangelism which usually remain separate. An evangelical faith joined with a liberating praxis calls evangelizers to act as well as to proclaim, and addresses individuals and structures and institutions. He was concerned to avoid the "either/or mentality" which divides horizontal and vertical, spiritual and secular, social action and evangelism, personal and social, individual sin and structural sin.<sup>33</sup> Whereas this kind of evangelism can alienate people with its narrow and reductionistic approach, Costas attempted an evangelism which proclaims "a holistic, comprehensive message oriented to man in his multitudinous life situations."<sup>34</sup>

## Conclusion

Perhaps most important of all, Costas evangelized in the same way he lived his life—contextually and comprehensively. His understanding of evangelism represents a challenge to the North American church to move to the periphery in its evangelism, to proclaim there God's salvation in Jesus Christ, to be comprehensive in uniting faith with a liberating praxis, to be agents of transformation on the periphery, and to evangelize persons and institutions and structures. This challenge which he has left to us he also made the focus of his life.

My theological itinerary is the history of my spiritual pilgrimage. It reflects a continual crisis of identity and a tireless fight to give coherence to the belonging to two worlds practically opposed. Thanks to the Gospel, that gives a privileged place to the poor, dispossessed and oppressed, and the common experience of marginalization of many Latin American peoples as an Hispanic minority in the United States, I have been able to discover a socio-historical, theological and missional convergence between the two sides of the Americas. It is in the commitment of Jesus Christ with the poor, dispossessed and oppressed . . . that I have been able to understand the Christian mission . . . It is in the periphery of history where Jesus died and is found today . . . And it is the place where I have brought my theological itinerary. From there I am learning to live, to think and to communicate the faith in love and hope.<sup>35</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Orlando Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982), pp. 185-186.

<sup>2</sup>Orlando Costas, "Evangelism and the Gospel of Salvation," *International Review of Mission* 63 (January 1974) p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>4</sup>Mortimer Arias, "Contextualization In Evangelism: Towards an Incarnational Style," *Perkins Journal* (Winter 1979), p. 8. Costas, too, perceived the incarnational model as appropriate to contextualization. In an earlier book, he made this connection. See Orlando Costas, ed., *Hacia Una Teología de la Evangelización* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1973), pp. 122-124. Later, he wrote an article entitled, "Contextualization and Incarnation: Communicating Christ amid the Oppressed," included in the volume, *Christ Outside the Gate*, ch. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Orlando Costas, "Evangelism in the Third World: A Latin American/Caribbean Reflection." (Mimeographed). The Bolivian Manifesto concurs on this point. "Evangelism cannot, therefore, be reduced to a formula which can be uniformly applied to any situation or to the mere verbalism of evangelical propaganda." Arias, "Contextualization in Evangelism," p. 8. Undoubtedly Liberation Theology is an influence on them in this respect as it emphasizes the historical situation. Costas acknowledged, in a missiological work, that one of the benefits of Liberation Theology to missiology is its interest in taking the historical situation seriously. See Orlando Costas, *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1974), p. 240.

Costas clarified that *effective* change only takes place when the context, in contextual evangelism, includes the larger, more difficult issues such as the political, economic, and social realms. In this respect, he distinguished between models of contextual evangelism which reflected only certain aspects of the context and other models which embraced all aspects of the context. Those in the first category, which considered only the cultural, linguistic or psychological context, were, according to Costas, sorely lacking. He wrote in this respect, "An evangelization that is only interested in finding equivalent formulas in a given culture, or in discovering the felt needs of a people, in order to make the gospel culturally, linguistically or psychologically pertinent, is contextually superficial and prophetically acritical." (Orlando Costas, *Evangelización Contextual: Fundamentos teológicos y pastorales* [San José: SEBILA, 1986], p. 61. Translation mine.) This kind of contextual evangelism is limited because it fails to account for the larger and more difficult questions of context. The context for those models in the second category, like Costas', include particularly those issues mentioned

above—the political, economic, and social. He considered these aspects as the most pressing. As a result, any sufficient model of contextual evangelism must give primary attention to these more conflictual areas.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 106. Translation mine. He exhibited previous indications of this understanding of contextualization in the article mentioned above. See note 4. In that article, he discussed the location of Jesus in his lifetime among the poor and the oppressed, and the Jesus still found there today. "Insofar as Christ has assumed the identity of the hurt, he is one with them. We can affirm, accordingly, that Christ today is a black Southern African, a Latin American peasant, a Cambodian refugee, a homeless Palestinian, a persecuted Russian Jew, an orphan and homeless child, a humiliated female person." (Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate* p. 13.) Several pages later he drew some initial conclusions from this affirmation of Jesus among the dispossessed, "In order to communicate him effectively to the world, we need to know experientially who he really is, where we may find him, and on what basis we can be related to him." (*Ibid.*, p. 15.) These statements prepared Costas for his later definition of contextual evangelism, but that there was a development is clear. In his Strachan lectures, Costas assumed the position of Jesus on the periphery; yet, even more, he called for the location of the evangelist to be on the periphery. This is contextual evangelism that the gospel message be announced on the periphery and then to the rest of the world.

<sup>7</sup>Costas, *Evangelización Contextual*, p. 85. Translation mine.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 85-86. Translation mine.

<sup>9</sup>Orlando Costas, "Christian Mission From the Periphery," *Faith and Mission* 1 (Fall 1983), p. 8.

<sup>10</sup>Costas, *Evangelización Contextual*, p. 60. Translation mine with the help of a similar statement by Costas in English in the article, "Christian Mission From the Periphery."

<sup>11</sup>As Costas wrote, "It was then that Esther remembered that the liberation of her people had precedence over her individual well-being and even over her official position." *Ibid.*, p. 33. Translation mine.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>13</sup>Costas, "Christian Mission from the Periphery," pp. 1-2. In bringing this to a modern day situation, Costas compared the Galilean Jews to Hispanics in the United States. See Costas, *Evangelización Contextual*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>14</sup>Costas, "Christian Mission From the Periphery," p. 6.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>16</sup>World Council of Churches, *Your Kingdom Come, Mission Perspectives Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism*, Melbourne, Australia, 12-25 May, 1980 (Geneva: Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, World Council of Churches, 1980), p. 219.

<sup>17</sup>Costas, "Evangelism and the Gospel of Salvation," p. 26.

<sup>18</sup>Costas *Evangelización Contextual*, p. 24. Translation mine.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>22</sup>Orlando Costas, *Qué Significa Evangelizar Hoy?* (San José: Publicaciones INDEF, 1973), p. 39.

<sup>23</sup>"One of the most pertinent contributions which the Latin American church can make to the quest for a new tomorrow is to proclaim, without reductions or apologies, the gospel of liberating hope so as to help these masses cultivate the expectations of a new day. Such a proclamation must take flesh in concrete acts. It must heal, restore and quicken the understanding so as to enable the suffering masses 'to pluck and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow' the objective and subjective, institutional and personal causes behind their oppressive situation and help them to participate in the building and planting (cf. Jer. 1:10) of a more free, fraternal and peaceful society." Orlando Costas, *Theology of the Crossroads in Contemporary Latin America, Missiology in Mainline Protestantism: 1969-1974* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi N.V., 1976), pp. 343-44.

<sup>24</sup>Orlando Costas, *The Integrity of Mission, The Inner Life and Outreach of the Church* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 75.

<sup>25</sup>Orlando Costas, "Teólogo en la encrucijada," in *Hacia Una Teología Evangélica Latinoamericana*, ed., C. René Padilla, Colección F.T.L. (San José: Editorial Caribe, 1984), p. 22. Translation and italics mine.

<sup>29</sup>He defined "institutions" in the following way: "These are the areas of life that give continuity to culture and enable it to develop its creative function. Consequently they are designated 'institutions' because they establish and fix group life." (Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, p. 167.) Examples of institutions are "private and social property, the monetary system, marriage, and religions." (*Ibid.*) In defining the word, "structures", he wrote quoting Rubem Alves, "They are neither persons nor things, buildings nor even organizations. . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 170.) Alves feels that "the aim of these structures is the monopoly of power. They have a threefold component: economic, military, and scientific domination, which, in turn, respond to a single, unifying logic, namely, that of purchase and possession." (*Ibid.*)

<sup>27</sup>Orlando Costas, *El Protestantismo En América Latina Hoy: Ensayos del camino (1972-1974)*, Colección "Iglesia y Misión", Número 3 (San José: Publicaciones INDEF, 1975), pp. 121-122.

<sup>28</sup>" . . . to communicate the good news relevantly, deeply, and critically throughout the whole world we need to take account of the institutions of society and contextualize its message amid them. Failure to do so will make the gospel's call to faith and repentance, its invitation to the Christian fellowship, and its challenge to participation in the transformation of history a spurious exercise." Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, p. 168.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>31</sup>Costas, *El Protestantismo Hoy*, p. 134. Translation mine.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 134-135. Translation mine.

<sup>33</sup>See Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, p. 162.

<sup>34</sup>Costas, "Evangelism and the Gospel of Salvation," p. 25.

<sup>35</sup>Costas, "Teólogo en la encrucijada," p. 34. When Orlando Costas died, I was at the Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano in San José, Costa Rica where he had been a professor. That week a publication from CELEP (Centro Evangélico Latinoamericano de Estudios Pastorales), an organization with which he had worked, honored him with testimonies from people who had known him. Several of these testimonies seem pertinent to the themes of this article. Eugenio Orellana—"I was with Orlando a year in Andover Newton. He directed a seminar for Third World ethnic groups in New England. His passion for this new task was uncontrollable. His optimism was contagious. He had grand plans for the minorities in the area . . . He saw the future. 'We are going to have something big.' That's what he was doing when the Lord called him." Ana Langerak ". . . Latin-Caribbean heart . . . lucid thinking . . . ecumenical evangelical . . . inspiring words . . . integral mission . . . hispanic world . . . Christ on the periphery . . . mentor and friend."

## "THE GREAT COMMISSION" Mission as Discipleship

Mortimer Arias

The so-called "Great Commission" has been at the forefront of mission literature and evangelistic materials since the great missionary conferences of the second half of the 19th century. It is an obligatory reference at congresses on evangelization, and in every new attempt to call the churches to fulfill their missionary responsibility or to recover their evangelistic thrust in our days. A fresh reading of Matthew 28:16-20 in its own context in the first gospel, however, reveals several ungranted assumptions, and at the same time a fascinating potentiality to understand in a new and creative way the meaning of mission and evangelism for the Christian church today.

### Common Assumptions and a Few Surprises

To begin with, this climactic passage of Matthew is called "The Great Commission" in the literature of the field, and it is assumed that to resort to it is enough to decide on the nature of mission or evangelism. This assumption took shape by the beginning of this century, though during the second half of the 19th century it was occasionally referred to as "the Great Mandate."<sup>1</sup>

#### "Great Commission"?

The first surprise is that this designation is not part of the biblical text. It is an editorial title used in the King James Version, and probably in other more contemporary editions that follow the KJV precedent. As an editorial title, not included in the received text of the gospel, and as the work of the publisher of the Scriptures, it implies an interpretation of the text. It is, clearly, a value judgement to call it "the *Great Commission*".<sup>2</sup> There is a Great Commandment, and "the greatest" at that, where Jesus responds to a key question in the whole gospel. But this is not on a particular task of Christians. It is on the essence of Christian faith, namely

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love of God and love of neighbor. In this case, the value judgement comes from Jesus himself (Matthew 22:37-40).

It is also commonly assumed that the Great Commission has been the most powerful text for motivating Christian mission throughout the centuries, and that obedience to the command of "making disciples of all nations" is all we need for a renewal of mission faithfulness and evangelistic zeal. Yet Michael Green, who scrutinized the matter through documentary evidence in the first three centuries in his masterly *Evangelism in the Early Church*, found no references to this text as a motivation for the mission more than once.<sup>3</sup> And Lesslie Newbigin agrees with Harry Boer: it has not been demonstrated that the text was used as the basis for missions until the time of William Carey.<sup>4</sup>

#### Four versions of the "commission"

Another surprising facet of this paradigmatic text is that there are at least four different forms of the so-called "great commission." In substance it is a mandate or mission charge with a different emphasis in each gospel: *teaching* in Matthew; *proclaiming* with signs in the "appendix" in Mark 16:15; *announcing forgiveness* and *witnessing* with life in Luke 24:44-47, Acts 1:6-8; and *being sent* to the world in an incarnational way in John 20:21. There are also references to this evangelistic or missionary mandate in pre-Easter material in the gospels: the sending of the Twelve in Matt. 10 and the Seventy-two in Luke 10; Mark 13:10;14:9; Matthew 24:14; 26:13; Luke 22:35ff.; John 10:16;12:32;13:20;17:18; etc. Moreover, there is a tendency to confuse the mandate in Matthew, "to make disciples . . . teaching them . . .," with the Markan appendix on "preaching the gospel," shifting from teaching to preaching. The subject and the content are also changed from "everything I have taught" (Matthew 28:19) to "the gospel" (Mark 16:15).

Curiously enough, it is usual to take the *form* of the missionary commission from the gospels ("preach," "make disciples," "witness") but to reduce the *content* of "the gospel" to a minimal kerygma, almost exclusively based on verses selected from Paul's letters and on some of his soteriological images (i.e. the so-called "plan of salvation," "the four spiritual laws," or some other evangelistic formula), without any direct connection to the gospels from which the evangelistic command is taken. The reading of the "Great Commission" in Matthew is done in such cases totally out of context.<sup>5</sup>

Actually, it might be properly called "the last commission," "the final commission" (Phillips), or "the last mandate of the resurrected Lord." "This final synthesis," conclude Senior and Stuhlmüller, "is a mission charge, highlighting the dynamic thrust of the entire gospel."<sup>6</sup>

#### A fundamental paradigm

In spite of all the above observations, I believe that the "Great Commission" is a fundamental paradigm for the mission of the church. What I

am suggesting in this paper is that the potentiality of this classic text should be explored through a contextual reading of the Gospel of Matthew, keeping in mind that his gospel was written out of mission, for mission, in a time of missionary perplexity and missiological crisis, and to a Christian community with staggering problems of identity and mission.

Otto Michel has said that "Matthew 28:18-20 is the key to the understanding of the whole Matthew's gospel" and that "this pericope is the summary of the whole gospel."<sup>7</sup> If this is so, then we need to understand the "Great Commission" in order to understand the gospel of Matthew. I would like to suggest, as well, that *we need to understand the gospel of Matthew in order to rightly understand the real meaning and the implications of the "Great Commission."*

Indeed, if we appeal to this Commission for our evangelistic task today, we are under an obligation to use, to the best of our ability, the best tools available in exegesis and hermeneutics of the gospels, and all the positive contributions to the understanding of the first gospel coming from the scholarship in the field. Contextual exegesis—going to the context of the gospel from our own context—and the contributions of redactional and literary criticisms can be extremely helpful for a new appropriation of the "Great Commission" paradigm.<sup>8</sup> In what follows, I shall attempt to apply such a re-reading of the "Great Commission" in the wider context of the whole gospel of Matthew to our understanding and practice of evangelism today, particularly in the areas of method, content, motivation, addressees and subjects of mission.

### The Method of Mission: Making Disciples

The most obvious feature of the Matthean version of the "last commission" is the method for mission: making disciples. It comes into focus when the Resurrected Lord points to the central task of mission: "Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them." For the gospel of Matthew, mission is discipleship.

In the last twenty years there has been a renewed emphasis on discipleship in evangelization. One of the main promoters of this emphasis has been the Church Growth school, under the leadership of Dr. Donald McGavran; so much so, that they have coined the neology "discipling" as the verbal form to describe the evangelistic task. Lesslie Newbigin has noted, however, that McGavran separates "discipling" from "perfecting." "Making disciples" is for him the specific evangelistic mission, and "teaching and baptizing" are left to other ministries in the church, and for a later stage in the life of the convert or disciple. Newbigin rightly contends that "McGavran's exegesis of the text will not stand scrutiny. It is clear in the original Greek that 'disciple the nations' is the main verb, and that 'baptizing and teaching' are adverbial clauses defining what 'discipling' is."<sup>9</sup>

Besides which, as we shall see, it is evident that the gospel of Matthew is didactic in character and intention, and that the last commission comes as the climax of the whole gospel.

### *A didactic paradigm*

The gospel of Matthew is fundamentally a didactic gospel. Jesus is presented as the new Teacher with authority (7:29), and the whole gospel is organized to be used as a teaching text. For a long time it has been observed that the teaching material of Matthew is divided into five didactic discourses, separated by the words "when Jesus finished these sayings," and preceded and followed by narrative material (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).<sup>10</sup>

The five discourses, in which some interpreters find allusions to Moses' five books, are collections of teachings on some crucial areas of Jesus message and life in the Kingdom:

- Infancy story - chs. 1-2
- I — Narrative - Chs. 3-4  
Sermon on the Mount - chs. 5-7
- II — Narrative - chs. 8-9  
Missionary discourse - ch. 10
- III — Narrative - ch. 12  
Parables of the Kingdom - ch. 13
- IV — Narrative - chs. 14-17  
Teachings on the Church - ch. 18
- V — Narrative - chs. 19-22 (23)  
Eschatology, Crisis and Parousia  
Passion story - chs. 26-28

There has been some discussion about the structure of Matthew as proposed above, but it is widely accepted that there are "structural breaks, repetitions, conscious accentuations."<sup>11</sup> With this apparent concentration on teaching and discipling, no wonder it has been suggested that the author of the gospel himself might have been a converted rabbi, "the scribe trained for the kingdom of heaven . . . who brings out from the treasure what is new and what is old" (13:51).<sup>12</sup> And Krister Stendahl has gone so far as to suggest that there was a "School of Matthew", a group of Christian scholars working with the Old Testament to explain the significance of Jesus and applying his teachings to the ongoing life of the church. The gospel, with its five books on Jesus' teachings, would be, in this interpretation, a handbook for teachers and church leaders in their missionary work with Jews and Gentiles. Victor P. Furnish also affirms that the evangelist was a teacher as well as his readers, and that the gospel is a pedagogical summary.<sup>13</sup>

### *Catechetical mission*

We don't need to agree with all the aspects of these proposals to recognize that the missionary method of the "Great Commission" paradigm is teaching and making disciples. If we are serious about taking Matthew 28:16-20 as the paradigm for mission today, our evangelization should concentrate on catechumenate, or what we call Christian education. Where did we get the idea that evangelism and Christian education are separate in the mission and ministry of the church? Mission for Matthew was catechetical mission.

Obviously, this understanding of the Commission has tremendous implications for mission today, when the Sunday School movement, so fruitful for 200 hundred years, has been lagging behind in most of our churches. It might even be said that we are going through a tunnel of Christian education demise. On the other hand, we have so much evangelization without discipleship, through the transnational corporations of "evangelism" and the invasion of the "electronic church" with its millions of consumers. But consumers of religion are a far cry from faithful disciples.

### *Orthopraxis*

Discipleship, Jesus style, in the gospel of Matthew, however, is much more than doctrinal teaching and religious training. Jesus' disciples were trained not only in orthodoxy—right doctrine—but in orthopraxis—the right way of doing and living, and dying. As Jack Dean Kingsbury has said, "the corollary to suffering sonship is suffering discipleship."<sup>14</sup> William R. Farmer has also shown that the gospel of Matthew was a presentation of the suffering Jesus for Christians facing martyrdom in their own situation, and notes that the great temptation for the second generation was to go from suffering discipleship to intellectual gnosticism,<sup>15</sup> from orthopraxis to orthodoxy, so to say.

What does this paradigm have to say to the popular evangelism of our day, committed to sell "a gospel of prosperity," totally alienated and alienating from a world of suffering and injustices, offered with cruel insensitivity to the millions of the First and the Third World, most of whom are struggling to survive? What does this discipleship of following Jesus along the way have to say to our watered-down versions of the gospel, preached without challenge and commitment from "a comfortable pulpit to a comfortable pew?"

### *Discipleship evangelism*

There are signs that our churches are moving towards a recovery of discipleship evangelization. Thomas Groome, building on the *praxis* pedagogy of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, and probed by the experience of the Base Christian Communities, has proposed the method of "shared praxis." In his book, *Christian Religious Education*, he quests

for a new Christian education which is related to the ongoing experiences of life.<sup>16</sup> Then we have David Lowes Watson, the present editor of this journal, a former professor of evangelism at Perkins School of Theology, and an expert in the religious societies in England in the eighteenth century, who has been working through the General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, trying to revive the old Wesleyan model of the "class meeting" in contemporary form, as displayed in his challenging book *Accountable Discipleship*.<sup>17</sup> The *Journal of the Academy for Evangelism* has reviewed Robert Coleman's *The Master Plan of Discipleship* and other works in the last three years with specific contributions to this new emphasis on discipleship evangelization. Most recently, William J. Abraham's *The Logic of Evangelism* is reviewed in this issue of the *Journal*.<sup>18</sup>

These signs are encouraging. If the churches of Europe and North America are going to evangelize the "neo-pagans" of their societies,<sup>19</sup> the Mathean missionary method is right on target.

### The Content of Mission: A Holistic Gospel

What is the content of the "Great Commission" in Matthew? We might expect something like the late ending of Mark, "to preach the gospel," or a kerygmatic summary of Christian proclamation. But what the Resurrected Lord had to say, and what the evangelist Matthew wanted his readers to remember, was something which at first sight is different: "teaching them everything I have taught you." This means that the disciples' mission was a continuation of Jesus' own teaching mission. As Brevard S. Childs concludes:

... the content of the disciples' evangelization by which the church is constituted remains the commandments of the earthly Jesus. The past tense of the Greek verb ('have taught') makes it clear that it is the words of the earthly Jesus which remain normative also for the post-resurrection church. His revelation of the will of God points to the 'way of righteousness' for all time. Therefore, the passage establishes not only the identity of the earthly Jesus and the exalted Christ, but the continuity of the one message.<sup>20</sup>

Where are the disciples going to find "everything Jesus taught?" For the readers of the gospel of Matthew, it was obvious that they were supposed to find it precisely in this gospel written for discipleship mission. So, we have to read it backward.

#### *Great Commission or Great Commandment?*

When we do so, we come across some striking features that jump out of the text. First, there is an emphasis on the commandment and the observance of the commandment. This might lead to a legalistic interpretation

of Jesus' teaching and to fall into the trap of the Law, against which Paul warned so strongly; though the Jesus of the gospel of Matthew would not leave us there.<sup>21</sup>

Even so, the emphasis of Jesus' teaching is on action and deeds (ch. 7), as in the parable of the Two Builders at the very end of the Sermon on the Mount (7:24-27), or in his insistence on producing and showing forth the fruits of the kingdom (7:16; 21:43), or in the definitive requirement of "a higher justice" (5:17-20). This justice is the theme of the whole of chapter 5, which has to do with the conduct of the disciple toward God and toward the neighbor. Justice (righteousness) is the name of the game, the very meaning of all the commandments, and the target for discipleship (3:15; 5:6; 5:20; 6:33; 21:32). Without this "superior justice" there is no entrance into the Kingdom (5:20).<sup>22</sup> The justice (righteousness) of the disciple will be evaluated now and on the day of judgment by its works and good fruit (5:20; 6:1-4; 7:15-21, 24-27; 10:42; 12:35-50; 13:23; 16:27; 19:21-22; 21:18-21, 28-32; 23:2-3; 24:45-51; 25:14-30, 31-46).

J. D. Kingsbury asks: "Is there a center to Jesus' radical teaching concerning the life of righteousness, the law, and, in general, the will of God? The answer is yes, and this center is 'love'."<sup>23</sup> If we look for a summary of the content of "everything he taught," it would be Jesus' own summary of the Law and the Prophets in the Great Commandment (22:37-40). The irony of Jesus' response to the scribe is that the "greatest commandment" is two commandments, to love God and to love neighbor! To announce a gospel that is not proclaiming and demanding this higher justice, and which ignores or postpones the highest priority of love in God's action and human life, is "cheap grace," and a departure from the "Great Commission," which sends us back to "everything Jesus taught." On this we have to agree with John R. W. Stott, the British evangelical leader, who declared at the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization: "There is no Great Commission without the Great Commandment."

In the Sermon on the Mount, the emphasis is on spirituality and ethics, not so much on soteriology. This is just the reverse of what we usually do in our evangelistic preaching, and might explain why the Sermon is not the favorite of preachers as a source for evangelistic sermons. We are not supposed to preach salvation by works, by fulfilling the law, and this has been a common misinterpretation of the Sermon on the Mount. William R. Farmer, however, has stressed that Matthew and Paul have the same theology in a different context, "a theology of empowerment, liberation . . . a movement of compassion, servanthood, self-giving, risk-taking . . ." <sup>24</sup> There is, as well, an implicit soteriology in the whole gospel of Matthew, in terms of the forgiveness of sins. There is a soteriology in the parables of the lost sheep and the two debtors, and in the metaphor of receiving the kingdom as a child, all of them in the third block of teaching (ch. 18). It is there at the center of the Last Supper: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (26:28). And it is there at the very beginning of the gospel, in the announcement of the coming of Jesus and giving him a name: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (1:21).

### *Christological center*

A second feature of "all that Jesus taught" is its Christological center, as can be seen in the text of the Commission itself: "All authority is given to me . . . I am with you . . . all I have commanded you." In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus presents himself as the final interpretation of the Law: "You have heard what was said to the people of old, but I say to you . . ." (5:21, 27, 33). The whole gospel is dedicated to present Jesus as the Messiah for the Jews and the Gentiles, as the Son of God and as the Son of Man.<sup>25</sup> At the very beginning, in the birth narratives, Matthew sets forth the significance of Jesus as Messiah, New Moses, Creator, Emmanuel.<sup>26</sup> The gospel story comes to a turning point when Peter confesses Jesus as "the Messiah, the Son of the Living God" (16:16-18). And Jesus' ministry comes to a touching focus in his invitation to come to him: "Come to me, all whose work is hard, whose load is heavy; and I will give you relief. Bend your neck to my yoke, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble-hearted; and your souls will find relief. For my yoke is good to bear, my load is light" (11:28-30).

Discipleship is not only obeying a commandment or following the teaching of Jesus, but a personal commitment to one person. "If anyone wants to be my disciple . . . take up your cross and follow me." The final criterion is the personal relationship with the Son of Man. But this relationship becomes concrete through the neighbor, particularly the "little ones," "the least ones of these." "Whoever receives a little one in my name receives me." "Whatever you have done to one of these . . . you have done it to me" (18:5; 25:40, 45). So, everything we do to our neighbor is not merely ethics, activism or social service, but has a Christological meaning. It is a service to Christ. Our neighbor becomes "a sacrament of Christ." Any other presentation of Christ that leaves the neighbor out is a false one, according to this gospel and to this paradigm for mission.

### *Holistic teaching: "the gospel of the kingdom"*

Another feature of "everything that Jesus taught" is its holistic character. The Resurrected Lord in this gospel does not leave out parts of his teaching for a later stage after evangelization. "Everything he taught" is part of the gospel. This cannot be characterized in a better way than Jesus himself did with his overall, all-encompassing, permanent and unique proclamation, his teaching and enacting of the Kingdom of God.<sup>27</sup> The gospel of Matthew designates it very often with the metonymy, "Kingdom of Heaven." Jesus had no other subject than the coming Rule of God, and this gospel abounds in it, making it the center and the target of discipleship in the Sermon on the Mount (the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer and the injunction, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and its justice"); displaying it as the only theme of the parables of the kingdom (ch. 13); pointing to a child as the clue for greatness in the kingdom in the chapter on the church (18:1ff); and making service to the needs of the "the little ones"

the fundamental requirement for entrance into the kingdom and for communion with the Son of Man (25:36-41).

So, how is it possible to fulfill the "Great Commission" without any reference to, or a substantial presentation of, "the gospel of the kingdom"?<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, this has happened, and we have seen an "eclipse of the Kingdom of God," especially in our evangelistic message.<sup>29</sup> We need to listen again to what biblical scholarship has to say about Jesus' original message for our own mission today:

To conclude, at the center of Jesus' preaching in Matthew's story is the Kingdom of Heaven, or God's eschatological Rule. In Jesus' preaching, the kingdom is salvation-historical, cosmic, and existential in nature. Salvation-historically, the Kingdom is a present, though hidden, reality in Jesus Son of God which is tending toward its consummation at the future coming of Jesus in this role as the Son of Man. Cosmically, the Kingdom can be said to grow as God guides it from seemingly insignificant beginnings in the ministry of Jesus and his disciples to the point where he determines that it will, at the end of time, embrace the world and all the nations in it. And existentially, the presence of the Kingdom in the person and words and deeds of Jesus and in the gospel the post-Easter church will preach impels persons to decision: will they repent, become followers of Jesus, and enter the sphere of God's Rule or will they refuse such entrance and live in the sphere where Satan rules?<sup>30</sup>

How about this as the content for evangelistic preaching and teaching? Can we formulate a better and more inclusive message than to announce the Kingdom of God in these historical, cosmic and personal dimensions? The call to decision and repentance comes naturally after the holistic presentation of Jesus' message on the Kingdom. What a difference this might make to our evangelistic preaching and teaching today! If we are going to take the "Great Commission" in Matthew seriously, we need to recover the fullness of the "gospel of the kingdom," and put evangelization into this perspective, as William J. Abraham does with his bold proposal to define evangelism as "Christian initiation into the Kingdom."<sup>31</sup>

## The Motivation for Mission: The Experience of the Living Lord

What is the motivation for mission behind the "Great Commission"? According to this text, what motivated the disciples was the experience of the Living Lord, from whom came the last commission. Indeed, the experience of the resurrection is behind the whole New Testament, including the mission of Paul several years later (1 Cor. 15:8). The experience of Easter is the spring for Christian mission. It is not merely a command: it is an experience that issues out in mission.

### *From worship to mission*

"When they saw him, they worshipped him." They heard the mission charge in the context of worship, even though, as the record says, "some of them were doubtful." It was a mixed congregation, and they had mixed feelings themselves; they believed and they doubted. Was Matthew just recording the inner struggles of the early disciples, or was he reflecting also the mood of the Syrian or some other congregations out of which this gospel was born and to which it was addressed?<sup>32</sup> In either case, Jesus' words of reassurance and authority were appropriate: for the doubting disciples after the crucifixion, as well as for the perplexed and bruised Jewish Christians who were expelled from the synagogues as believers in a Jewish Messiah utterly rejected by his own people.<sup>33</sup>

But no words could have given such reassurance without the experience of the living presence and power of the crucified Lord. Then it became a source of joy, power and missionary fervor. Lesslie Newbigin puts it well:

When we look carefully at this text we find that . . . it begins with a great shout of victory reminiscent of Psalm 93. All the waves and the billows have gone over the head of Jesus, but "mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the Lord on high is mighty." Jesus reigns . . . The mission begins with an explosion of joy, triumphant joy. The tomb is empty. Jesus lives. Death and hell are robbed of their victory. Every other authority, all the principalities and powers are disarmed. All authority is given to the crucified and risen Jesus. In him, God reigns . . . When we know this, we cannot keep silent about it.<sup>34</sup>

### *Between faith and doubt*

The "Great Commission" takes shape and is assumed in the midst of a community torn between faith and doubt, where "the love of many has grown cold" (24:12). Is there a more encouraging fact than this for the contemporary Christian Church, increasingly a minority in the world population, cornered by the system of values of our secularized culture, politely rejected by the powers of our day or manipulated by them for their own ends (with the pretext of "Christian Western civilization"), and perplexed by the reality of a religious pluralistic world?

If we continue reading back from the last pericope through the gospel of Matthew, we discover the missionary motivation in Jesus himself, namely, compassion for people: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (9:36).

### *Compassion*

Jesus saw the crowds—lots of people. And he loved them and suffered for them. He was not concerned with statistics; he was concerned with

people's suffering and their lot in an unjust and oppressing world and under false and unreliable leadership, "like sheep without a shepherd." How do we see people in North America or in the Third World when we look at them with evangelistic eyes? Are we concerned that people are without the gospel of Jesus Christ, without their due in the Kingdom of God in the world? Or are we concerned about "population explosion," "unchurched people," and institutional growth or decline?<sup>35</sup>

It would be presumptuous to think that we can do evangelism without sharing Jesus' compassion for people. And compassion leads to service and solidarity. As we have seen above, to love and to serve people is not an ethical appendix to Christian life or mission, but a way to serve and proclaim Christ and the Kingdom of God. It is time for us to reclaim this fulness of "Great Commission" motivation in the experience of the Living Lord, in community worship, and in loving and serving Christ through human neighbors. It is time to go beyond the unbiblical dichotomy of evangelism and social action.

Experience of the living Lord and compassion for people is thus the two-fold motivation we find in the Great Commission. The development of mission and evangelism through the pentecostal movement around the world in our century, and the increased opening of churches in the Third World to the whole gamut of human needs and suffering, are hopeful signs for the recovery of this powerful motivation for mission which we thought we had lost.

## The Addressees of Mission: The Nations and the Little Ones

It is not by chance that we have these five verses at the end of the gospel of Matthew (28:16-20). They make the whole point of the gospel: Jesus is the Jewish Messiah for the gentiles, for the nations, for the whole world. In 10:5-6 Jesus was sending his disciples first "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (cf. 15:21-28). But now, after pouring out his blood "for the many" (26:28), and having received "all authority and power in heaven and earth," the Lord is sending his disciples "to all nations."

### *Jews and Gentiles*

The Commission is the universalization of the discipleship in the Kingdom. Mission thus has an address on the envelope: "to each one and to every one," Jews or Gentiles, here and everywhere, now and to the end of time. This was Jesus' final command, and this was Matthew's answer to the missionary problem of his community, which was going through the painful and frustrating experience of seeing the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah and the marginalization of Christians from the community of faith of Israel.

The apparent failure in this rejection and marginalization was not, however, the end of mission. On the contrary, it was already anticipated

in the first missionary directive to the disciples: "When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next." Jesus' own rejection by his people became the model for mission: "A disciple is not above his teacher . . ." (10:16-42). By the same token, nor was the destruction of Jerusalem the end for mission. It was just the beginning of mission to the world. The double Christology of Matthew—Jesus as the Jewish Messiah (1:17; 2:2-6; 21:4-9; 27:37 and as the Messiah for the Nations (2:23; 4:15-16; 12:18-21)—points to the double target for the mission addressees.

Students of the first gospel suggest that it was written by a Hellenist Jew, fluent in Greek, familiar with the Jewish and Palestinian tradition, and living in the midst of a mixed community of Jews and Gentiles, probably in Syria or Antioch. But the vision of the Great Commission goes beyond its immediate context and horizon to "all the nations" and "to the whole world." "*Panta ta ethne*" includes both Jews and Gentiles, as can be seen in the judgment of the nations (25:32). The giving of the "the kingdom to a people that produces fruit" (21:43) is not an exclusion of the Jews. As W. G. Kummel says,

the unbelieving Jews are replaced by the eschatological people of God, who are identified by bringing forth fruits, so that the distinction between Jew and Gentile is no longer significant . . . The church is not the 'new' but the 'true' Israel.<sup>36</sup>

Likewise, Ely Eser Barreto Cesar, in his doctoral dissertation "*A Fe Como Acaõ na Historia: Hermeneutica do Nova Testamento no Contexto de America Latina*" (Faith Operating in History: New Testament Hermeneutics in the Context of Latin America) concludes that

A universal perspective of mission is the last word of the evangelist, as if the last service of the Resurrected One were to put all his power available for the nations. So, the opposition of the synagogue to the church could not be taken as the last word in history. And the will of God to create a new community of justice could no longer be reduced to a particular province. The Kingdom is to be universal. It is for the nations, including the Jews, in spite of the synagogue rejection!<sup>37</sup>

### "The little ones"

When we follow the gospel of Matthew, we also have to pay attention to one of its peculiar interests, "the little ones," who, in God's strange economy, are assigned a particular priority, both as the objects and the subjects of mission.

The "little ones" in this gospel include "the poor in spirit" (*ptokhoi*), those to whom the Kingdom of God belong (5:3), the very poor to whom the good news is announced as a sure sign that the Kingdom has come near (11:5), and those in whose service a would-be disciple was going to

find eternal life (19:21). The "little ones" are also the children (*paidia*) the objects of Jesus' love, to whom also the Kingdom belongs (19:14-15). Any child, powerless and unpretentious, whom Jesus put at the center, is more important than any important person in the Kingdom (18:2). These are the ones whom the disciple should imitate, becoming like a child to receive the Kingdom, and whom the disciple is called to receive and to serve (18:3-5). Xavier Pikasa, the remarkable Spanish Bible scholar we are following in this word review, says about these children:

They are the great addressees of God's love, the locus of God's privileged action in the world . . . the children are not for the church but the church for the gospel of children which Jesus has proclaimed.<sup>38</sup>

"Little ones" are also the "simple," the "mere children" to whom God is pleased to reveal the truth, who receive the knowledge of God as a gift; the "babes" who have no authority and no access to science, acclaiming the Messiah before the priests and the pharisees (21:14-15). "Little ones" are also the "weary" and "overburdened" (*kopiontes* and *pephortismenoi*, 11:28), to whom Jesus comes, "gentle and humble-hearted" (*praus* and *tapeinos*). In chapter 12 we have a show-window of the way Jesus ministered to little ones of this world (12:2, 10-13, 15, 22, 49).

"Little ones" are also disciples in the church. They are not outstanding; they are unassuming and powerless in the community (*mikroi*). But they are greater than the greatest (John the Baptist), because they belong to the Kingdom by grace (11:11); and as such, they are the object of Jesus' particular love and God's protection. The community of disciples is severely warned about being a stumbling block to them or despising them (18:6, 10, 14). To receive them and to serve them is rewarding before God (10:42).

Finally, 'the least ones of these' (*elakhistoi*) are the deprived and needy, the forgotten and neglected, who are the entourage of the Son of Man at the judgment seat, whom Jesus calls "my brethren," and with whom we are destined to meet and to serve the Son of Man (25:40, 45).<sup>39</sup> These are the privileged addressees of mission in the Great Commission. In them we see assured and affirmed the real universality of the gospel of the Kingdom, as Jesus proclaimed and taught it. Nobody is excluded, not even "the least one of these," except by the self-exclusion of denying justice and love to the "little ones," who are both the object and the subject of mission.

### Implications for our mission

To think of the implications of taking seriously this understanding of mission is mind-boggling. Who represent today "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" in the USA context? What about the evangelization of the church itself, "teaching them everything I have taught?" And who are "the nations" in the American context, in a nation where more than a hundred nations from all over the world are inside its boundaries, and where so

many old churches are dying? What is the meaning of the Great Commission for the mission field of "ethnic America," a teeming missionary field?<sup>40</sup> And what about being evangelized by the "nations" inside, by those "outside the gate," but who are coming with a new understanding of the gospel and a new thrust to share the good news, who are also a reservoir of missionary vision and power?<sup>41</sup>

There is an even more disturbing question for our mission today: Who are "the little ones" in our society? What are we doing for them and what is their place as subjects of mission through our churches?

The missionary center moved from Jerusalem, to Galilee, to Antioch; from the synagogue to the Gentiles; from Asia Minor to Rome; from Rome to Britain; from Britain to the USA. Where is the missionary center today? The growing edge of Christianity is in Africa and Latin America. What is the meaning of this fact for the fulfillment of the Great Commission? "Go to the lost sheep of Israel," "Go to the nations . . ."

## The Subject of Mission: A Church of Disciples

Lastly we come to the subject of mission. Who are the carriers or bearers of the last commission? The pericope begins by setting the original audience of the command: "Now the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to a mountain where Jesus had appointed them." Seemingly, the last commission was restricted to "the eleven," Judas excluded.

It is not superfluous to ask if we have to take the number literally and in an exclusive way. Were not "the other disciples" included? The women, who were the first witnesses and evangelists of the resurrection, seem to be absent from the convocation of which they were the mediators (28:7-10). Is this a way of telling the story in which they are submerged? Some commentators suggest that "the eleven" is a symbolic expression for "the disciples" in general, not only the Twelve. Similarly, "the mountain" would be a symbolic or theological mountain, "a site of end-time revelation,"<sup>42</sup> like several other mountains in this gospel (4:8-10; 5:1-2; 14:23, 15:29-31, 24:3).

Actually, what Matthew had in mind was "the implied reader,"<sup>43</sup> the Christian community of disciples of the last two decades of the first century. This was already a structured church with congregational prayer (18:19), church discipline (18:18), the Lord's supper (26:28), baptism, teaching and the trinitarian formula (28:19-20). "The eleven" represented this "appointed", convocated community of the living Lord, identified as the *ekklesia*, a word used only by Matthew among the evangelists (16:18; 18:17). In other words, in the gospel of Matthew the subject of mission moves from Jesus to the Twelve, and from them to the post-Easter church.

*The mission of Jesus* is presented in its inaugural stage as the proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven to those "dwelling in darkness," the "Galilee of the Gentiles" (4:12-17). It is described in terms of announcing the coming Kingdom through teaching, preaching and healing among the people (9:35-36). It is interpreted as the fulfillment of the prophecy that

"he will proclaim justice to the nations" "till he brings justice to victory," and "hope to the nations," by the Spirit of God and in the style of the chosen and suffering Servant of the Lord (12:15-21).

*The mission of the disciples*, the Twelve, during Jesus' earthly ministry, is fully charted in chapter 10. They are called and sent to share in Jesus' proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of heaven (vv. 5-7). Their mission is confined to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (v.6). They are going to share also in Jesus' healing ministry, and receive "authority to expel evil spirits and to heal all kinds of disease and infirmity" (vv.1, 8), but without any specific command to teach, which was reserved to Jesus himself.

This is a temporary mission, but it reflects as well the context and the required attitudes for the mission of the disciples in Matthew's time and place: to preach without pay and without economic provisions (vv. 8-10); to go from house to house, from town to town in a mission of "peace." Their mission is patterned by Jesus' own mission, including rejection, slander, hate, trials and punishment, family misunderstanding, even death. It is mission under the cross. But they should not fear. The Holy Spirit will give them words to respond, the Father loves them, and the Son of Man will vindicate them (10:16-42).

*The mission of the church* comes as the climax of the gospel, following in a line with the mission of Jesus and the temporary mission of the Twelve. All of the above is behind the Great Commission. The three shapes of mission coalesce with each other in this gospel, written fifty years after the Resurrection. But here, at the mountain of the Resurrected Lord, mission is centered in a church of disciples and trusted to them. Their mission is none other than Jesus' mission, and this time they receive specific command and authority to "teach and baptize," "making disciples of all nations." It is mission from disciples for disciples. Mission is discipleship in the making.

Naturally, our question today would be: Who is the subject of mission? Where is the church represented at the mountain of the Resurrection? In other words, we have to deal with the old question of the apostolicity of the church. Where is the true apostolic church to carry the mission in the world today? Is it the one represented by the Catholic stream of churches with historical continuity? Is it the reformed church, where "the true Word is preached and the sacraments are rightly administered?" Is it the "born again" church of those who define themselves as evangelicals? Is it the church of the Pentecostal experience spreading out among the masses of the world? Is it the para-church of the transnational evangelistic enterprises or the electronic empire? Is it the ecclesial base communities of Latin America, with their reading of the scriptures from the poor? Is it the divided and harrassed church of the common people of Central America, with its host of martyrs? Is it the church of the coalitions and task forces for justice and peace issues and the sanctuary movement in North America? Where are the marks of true apostolicity in mission in the conservative, liberal or radical streams of the church of today?

### *Apostleship and apostolicity*

The fact of the matter is that our church is divided and speaks with many voices. If we ask where is the fidelity to discipleship in "everything Jesus taught," all churches would claim the right to apostleship and apostolicity. For sure, there is the ecumenical movement. There is the convergence of the churches in the task of evangelization of the world, as seen in world events like the Lausanne Congress in 1974, the Nairobi Assembly of the WCC, the Evangelii Nuntiandi Exhortation from Pope Paul VI, and joint efforts for mission in many parts of the world. There are the studies on proselytism and common witness, and the present study on Apostolic Faith by the Faith and Order commission and all the churches involved. All of these are important steps in correcting the most scandalous aspects of Christian mission and in recovering the fullness of the mission charge of our Lord.

A sober and encouraging fact about the Great Commission in the gospel of Matthew, however, is that the church of the disciples in the first century was not an ideal church. It was a church where the "tares" were together with the "wheat;" a church where there were "hypocrites," "false prophets" and "false messiahs" misleading the congregations; a church where "many were falling away and betrayed one another;" a church where "because wickedness multiplied, the love of many was growing cold," and so on. There were rich ones, and the love of riches was choking the good seed of the Kingdom. And there were the poor, the little ones, and the harrassed and downtrodden.

In short, it was a church with very serious missionary problems. In a study of discipleship and mission in Matthew, Karen Ann Barta makes this comment on the Matthean community to which the gospel is addressed:

It is directed to a predominantly Jewish-Christian community which is painfully aware both of the past failure of mission to Israel and of the current efforts by the Jewish synagogue to discredit it completely. Not surprisingly, the Matthean community has lost its missionary nerve and has become increasingly preoccupied with family and personal affairs.<sup>44</sup>

Is there anything here that we can appropriate for our own missionary situation?

The encouraging and challenging fact is that it was this church, just as it was, divided, imperfect, full of conflicts and doubts, in the midst of the most trying situation, which was able to experience the presence of the Living Lord and to hear his summons to "make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe everything I have taught." And they did. Somehow they fulfilled their entrusted mission, and through them we have received "the gospel of the kingdom," incarnated in the Son of God and the Son of Man, along with a full account of "everything he taught." Together with the challenge and inspiration of the Last Commission, all of this is now ours to be passed on.

Ours is also the promise that comes with the command and makes it possible: "And I will be with you always, to the end of the world."

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The missionary conferences on the evangelization of the world used to speak of "The Great Command," or "The Command of the Lord." See John Harris, *The Great Commission or the Christian Church Constituted and Charged to Convey the Gospel to the World* (Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1843); T. B. Kilpatrick, *New Testament Evangelism* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1911).

<sup>2</sup>See Mortimer Arias, "A Crisis in Definition: The Recover of Candor," *Perkins Journal* XXXIII.2 (Winter 1979): 9-19.

<sup>3</sup>Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1970), pp. 239-40, n.11.

<sup>4</sup>Lesslie Newbigin, *Mission in Christ's Way: Bible Studies* (Geneva: WCC, 1987), p.32.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmuehler, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983), p. 251.

<sup>7</sup>Otto Michel, "Der Abschluss des Mathäusevangeliums," *Evangelische Theologie* 10 (1950/51):16-26. English translation, "The Conclusion of Matthew's Gospel" in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, edited by Graham Stanton, (Philadelphia and London: Fortress Press and SPCK, 1983)

<sup>8</sup>I have found the studies of Jack D. Kingsbury on Matthew especially helpful. His first volume uses redaction criticism, and his later illuminating volume uses the most recent perspectives of literary criticism: *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975); *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986). For other key articles on the Great Commission, see Norbert Greinacher and Alois Müller, eds., *Evangelization in the World Today*, Concilium No. 114 (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), p.7, n.6.

<sup>9</sup>Newbigin, *Mission*, pp. 35f.

<sup>10</sup>See W. D. Davies, *Invitation to the New Testament: A Guide to Its Main Witnesses* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), p. 216. See also David R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, (Sheffield: Almond, 1988).

<sup>11</sup>Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), pp. 63f.

<sup>12</sup>O. Lamar Cope, *Matthew: A Scribe Trained for the Kingdom of Heaven*, (Washington DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1976).

<sup>13</sup>Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968). See also Victor P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978), pp. 98ff.

<sup>14</sup>Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, p. 114: "Suffering, defined as servanthood, is the essence of discipleship."

<sup>15</sup>William R. Farmer, *Jesus and the Gospel: Tradition, Scripture and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), pp. 154-59. Farmer gives special attention to the martyrdom motif in the Jesus tradition, and particularly in the gospel of Matthew. The passion of Jesus and his death are the example for the disciples on how to suffer, and how to die. To be a disciple was to be a confessor, like Jesus himself. In this sense, the missionary discourse in Matthew 10:5-42, designed to prepare his disciples "to make a witness before the authorities (both Jewish and gentile) 'like' that made by their teacher," is even more original and important than the Sermon on the Mount itself.

<sup>16</sup>Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980).

<sup>17</sup>David Lowes Watson, *Accountable Discipleship: Handbook for Covenant Discipleship Groups in the Congregation* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1984). Cf. David Lowes Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting: Its Origins and Significance* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985).

<sup>18</sup>William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989). See also Robert E. Coleman, ed., *Evangelism on the Cutting-Edge* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1986); Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship* (Revell, 1987); and Samuel R. Schutz, "A Goal-Directed Model for Disciple-Making," *Journal of the Academy for Evangelism*, Volume Three (1987-1988): 62-71.

<sup>19</sup>W.A. Visser't Hooft, "Evangelism in the Neo-Pagan Situation," in *Mission Trends 2: Evangelization*, edited by Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky (New York: Paulist Press and Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 123-25; and Alfred C. Krass, *Evangelizing Neo-Pagan North America: The Word That Frees* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1982). See also Harold Lindsell, *The New Paganism: Understanding American Culture and the Role of the Church* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

<sup>20</sup>Childs, *New Testament*, pp. 66f.

<sup>21</sup>See John P. Meier, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel: A Redactional Study of Mt. 5:17-48* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976); Richard S. McConnell, *Law and Prophecy in Matthew's Gospel: The Authority and Use of the Old Testament in the Gospel of St. Matthew* (Basel: Komm. Friedrich Reinhardt, 1969). See also Ely Eser Barreto Cesar, "Faith Operating in History: New Testament Hermeneutics in a Revolutionary Context (Latin American Protestants)" Ph.D. Dissertation, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, 1983.

<sup>22</sup>G. Strecker, "The Concept of History in Matthew" in *The Interpretation of Matthew* edited by Graham Stanton (Philadelphia and London: Fortress Press and SPCK, 1983), pp. 67-84.

<sup>23</sup>Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, p.68.

<sup>24</sup>Farmer, *Jesus and the Gospel*, pp. 48-50.

<sup>25</sup>Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, Chapter 2: "The Presentation of Jesus."

<sup>26</sup>Davies, *Invitation*, pp. 216-18.

<sup>27</sup>See Mortimer Arias, *Announcing The Reign of God: Evangelization and the Subversive Memory of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). See also *Your Kingdom Come: Mission Perspectives*. Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, Melbourne, Australia, 12-25 May 1980 (Geneva: WCC, 1980).

<sup>28</sup>For a confession and an attempt to explain the "Evangelical" silence about the Kingdom, see C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), pp. 1-16. Cf. my comment on this in *Announcing the Reign of God*, p. 124, n.7.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 12, 55-68.

<sup>30</sup>Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, p. 64.

<sup>31</sup>Abraham, *Logic of Evangelism*, pp. 13-39.

<sup>32</sup>On the situation and the mood of the Syrian churches, see Farmer, *Jesus and the Gospel*, pp. 134-38, and his earlier article "The Post-Sectarian Character of Matthew and Its Post-War Setting in Antioch of Syria" in *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 3 (1976): 235-47.

<sup>33</sup>D.R.A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

<sup>34</sup>Newbigin, *Mission*, p.33.

<sup>35</sup>Arias, *Announcing*, pp. 77-80.

<sup>36</sup>Werner Georg Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 16th ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), p. 116.

<sup>37</sup>Ely Eser Barreto Cesar, *A Fe como Acaõ na Historia: Hermeneutica do Novo Testamento no Contexto da America Latina* (Sao Paulo, Brazil: Edicoes Paulinas, 1988), p. 180. For English reference, see note 21.

<sup>38</sup>Xavier Pikaza, *Hermanos de Jesús y Servidores de los Más Pequeños* (Mt. Z5:3146) Salamanca: Sígueme, 1984), p. 311.

<sup>39</sup>McConnell, *Law and Prophecy*, pp. 123-25.

<sup>40</sup>Mortimer Arias, "Centripetal Mission, or Evangelization by Hospitality," *Missiology*, X.1 (January 1982): 69-82.

<sup>41</sup>Orlando E. Costas, *Christ Outside The Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982), pp. 174-94.

<sup>42</sup>Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, p. 29.

<sup>43</sup>The "implied reader" is a concept in literary criticism. See *ibid.*, 36-38: "...the imaginary person in whom the intention of the text is to be thought as always reaching its fulfillment."

<sup>44</sup>Karen Ann Barta, "Mission and Discipleship in Matthew: A Redaction-Critical Study of Mt. 10:34," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Marquette, Wisconsin, 1979, p. 128.

## THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF THE CATHOLIC PARISH MISSION

Patrick J. Sena

Before speaking about the topic at hand, I do wish to thank Ray Bakke for issuing this invitation. I appreciate being asked to deliver a paper before the Academy. This is in fact the second paper which I have delivered before the Academy—the first was during that epoch in which the papers were neither noted nor published.

Also, because of previous commitments, I have been unable to make the last several meetings. In 1986 I was in Rome at the time when Pope John Paul II called for a day of prayer for peace and during which he prayed with other leaders of Christianity, Judaism, and non-Christian religions at Assisi in Italy. It was an extraordinary event fraught with some controversy to be sure, but a bold undertaking nevertheless. In 1987 I was in South Korea, where I gave retreats to the Maryknoll Catholic Missionaries. I noted that not only do Catholics and Protestants have little to do with one another but also that the various Protestant traditions apparently engage in little or no ecumenical activities at all. Thus the events of 1986 and 1987 were very different, and raised issues which have been, and should continue to be, reflected upon by the members of this Academy: the questions of evangelism and the peace movement; and evangelism in an ecumenical context. But now to the matter at hand.

I would like to quote from Milton Rudnick's book *Speaking the Gospel Through The Ages* (Concordia Publishing Co., 1984). In speaking of Catholic outreach to immigrants in the 19th Century, he says:

A very important agency of Catholic outreach to transplanted Europeans was the parish mission. This was a series of daily preaching and teaching activities conducted in a parish, usually for a period of one week, by members of one of the evangelistic orders. Held ordinarily only once every three or four years, the parish mission was designed to attract and convert marginal or inactive Catholics (most immigrants were in these categories) as well as to generate greater commitment among those already

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in the fold. The preachers were skillful and emotional orators. They concentrated primarily on sin and on the need for repentance and reformed living, but they also offered God's mercy in Christ. Preaching services were held in the evening, and basic instruction in Catholic doctrine was offered in the morning. Extensive advertising and promotion prepared for the mission. Dramatic ceremony accompanied it. A specific goal was to prepare participants for private confession and Holy Communion. For support and maintenance of faith afterward they were referred, not only to the sacramental ministries of the parish, but also to devotional confraternities. The latter were societies devoted to the veneration of Mary, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Rosary and similar uniquely Catholic expressions of piety (p. 166).

One might safely say that this was the standard approach to the Catholic Mission in the pre-Vatican II Council era in the 20th century as well. But today, while the Catholic parish mission embodies the same model (and while some are unfortunately still practicing the identical approach), it is no longer addressed only to marginal Catholics. It is designed above all for the churchgoing Catholics, to educate, to uplift, and to bring about a deeper commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. The support and maintenance after such a mission is no longer entrusted to the confraternities, but is rather entrusted to the ongoing Bible study program and the various service ministries of the parish, among which, in many parishes, would be the evangelization ministry. It was Pope Paul VI in his landmark Apostolic Exhortation *On Evangelism in the Modern World* (1975) who delineated for Catholics the beneficiaries of evangelization in article 52 of that same Exhortation:

This first proclamation is addressed especially to those who have never heard the Good News of Jesus, or to children. But as a result of the frequent situations of dechristianization in our day, it also proves equally necessary for innumerable people who have a certain faith but an imperfect knowledge of the foundations of that faith, for intellectuals who feel the need to know Jesus Christ in a light different from the instruction they received as children, and for many others.

During these past years I have become involved rather extensively in doing parish missions. The Religious Community of which I am a member is the Society of the Precious Blood, founded by a Roman priest named Gaspar Del Bufalo on August 15, 1815. Gaspar was a preacher of parish missions and his task was to evangelize the bandits in the Papal States. My Italian confreres, although not evangelizing bandits, nevertheless, still do parish missions in what was once the Papal States.

With the advent of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) the parish mission lapsed into a moribund state. There was little Bible teaching

during the traditional parish mission, even though some Bible texts were used. The emphasis was upon doctrine as such without seeing its biblical and traditional roots. In the post II Vatican Council era emphasis was once again placed on the Sacred Scriptures in the lives of the faithful; there was a spirit of openness and joy which pervaded the church. An ongoing call for repentance was pushed into the background together with the strong emphasis upon sin. At the same time there was a diminution in the emphasis upon the liturgical and spiritual life based upon biblical theology. In fact the Common Lectionary in use by many mainstream churches owes its origin to the Catholic Church's revision of the Roman Missal in 1969 with the division of the liturgical Mass texts into two books: *Sacramentary* and *Lectionary*. At that time Pope Paul VI stated that the reason for going to a three year Sunday cycle of biblical texts was threefold: the Bible would be understood to be the basis of theology, of catechetics, and of spirituality. Yet with this new emphasis placed upon the Bible there has been within the last decade an emphasis upon the parish mission in a much more biblical form. At the same time the parish mission is seen as the act of evangelizing the churchgoer so that he or she may have a greater appreciation and understanding of the faith with all of its practical consequences.

The Catholic parish mission consists of the Word and Sacrament or the Word and Liturgy. I would like to give you a broad perspective of a parish mission which I have conducted and continue to conduct when the topic is left up to my discretion. Within this broad perspective one can discern the synthesized definition of evangelism which George Hunter, III gives us on pp 26-34 of *The Contagious Congregation* (Abingdon Press, 1979): Evangelism is a) what we do to make the Christian faith, life and mission a live option for persons, both outside and inside the church b) what Jesus does through *kerygma*, *koinonia*, and *diakonia* to set people free c) what the respondents do to appropriate the possibility of turning to Christ, to the Christian message and ethic, to a Christian community, and to Christian mission. I believe that the component parts of this definition are to be found in the modern parish mission as conducted in the Catholic Church.

On the first night of a parish mission my preaching deals with a proper understanding and love for the Bible as a source of spiritual and intellectual growth and a proper understanding of our own Catholic tradition—a pride in that tradition. The preaching is interspersed with hymns and generally concludes with an act of faith with the congregation reciting the Creed. With Catholics it is still very necessary to impress upon them the importance of the Bible in their lives and to have a correct outlook as regards their own tradition. During a mission the faithful are interested in purchasing Bibles, books and devotional articles. Often the parish will make such commodities available to the congregation. During such a service there is a procession with the Sacred Word and it is enthroned before the altar. Prominence, both visually and contextually, is demonstrated toward the Word of God. There is an emphasis on participating in the parish Bible classes, or, if no such classes currently exist, to inaugurate

such classes for the people of the given parish. As most Protestant pastors know, more than one Catholic has joined a Protestant denomination precisely because of the desire to know more about the Bible and to understand it. Thus the emphasis is upon the *kerygma* — the Good News of Jesus Christ which is based upon the revealing Lord and found in the Bible and in our Sacred Tradition.

The second night deals with the need for reconciliation. The emphasis is upon the love of God who desires to save and to forgive. It emphasizes Biblical preaching of the need to be reconciled and the fact that all sin is not merely personal, but also communal. This night's teaching is devoted to the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession as it is still popularly called. There is an emphasis upon the proper understanding and reception of this beautiful sacrament. I employ Form II of the three forms of auricular confession. Form I is private confession of sins and private absolution. Form III is general absolution with a mere gesture of an indication of sin. Form II is Communal in that the Word is announced to all, sorrow is elicited from all, Contrition is required from all and then each individually comes forward before the congregation and confesses his/her sins before the priest, is absolved, and then returns to his/her proper place in the congregation. We Catholics believe that it is possible to sin even after conversion, but that there is healing power in the Sacrament of Reconciliation as an extension of Christ's healing ministry in the world. Some of the words which the priest says when absolving are these "Through the ministry of the Church may God grant you pardon and peace. And I absolve you. . .".

Reconciliation is always a Communal expression of God's love. The emphasis is upon the fact that the Community has suffered through personal sin, the Church's teaching on the need for the Sacrament in the case of the commitment of serious sins and the use of the Sacrament when lesser sins are involved is explained in a catechetical and practical fashion. A recurring theme is that there is power of prominence in the sanctuary. With the emphasis upon the community as well as the individual, some time is spent with the concept of social justice, the lack of which involves the community as well as the individual in sin. The coming before the congregation to confess individual sins to the priest might be likened to an altar call in various Protestant denominations. Thus it is evident that this night is devoted to embracing the Christian ethic and in a turning toward Christ.

The third night deals in an extensive way with the Eucharist from a Biblical and practical point of view: what the eucharist is as nourishment and what it is as a common bond among the members of the Congregation with one another—the private and communitarian aspects of Eucharistic Liturgy and practice. The Eucharist is understood to be the nourishment by which the faith continues to grow. There is an emphasis upon the community which celebrates the Eucharist and the importance of the people of God in the celebration. The Eucharist is understood as the Sacrament which heals lesser sins and the celebrating event which recommissions the congregation to go forth and evangelize — proclaiming

the Good News to all whom they meet. Eucharist practices are explained: the difference between the liturgical practice of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and Eucharist liturgy; the role of the blood of Christ as well as the body of Christ during the Mass. An emphasis upon the sacramental incarnation of the Lord Jesus in each believer who receives is highlighted. The session ends with either the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament or with the Mass and the recitation of the Creed. It is within the Eucharist that true *koinonia* is found and such *koinonia* leads into an ongoing community fellowship even outside of the liturgical action.

The fourth evening is devoted to the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and the Elderly (previously called Extreme Unction). The Bible foundation in James, chapter 5, is explained and the special love which Christ demonstrates to those who need it the most is enunciated. Both spiritual and physical healing can be found in the Sacramental anointing. The healthy and young members are vitally involved in the administration of the Sacrament. The holy oils used in this sacrament are carried in procession and placed prominently in the sanctuary. Those qualified come forward then to be healed by the saving power of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an evening devoted to being touched by the Living Lord and many a person has turned toward the Lord after being touched both spiritually and physically by his loving embrace. The emphasis is upon the fact that Christ has turned to the individual members of the congregation to heal and strengthen them. They must respond by turning totally to Jesus Christ and giving him their very lives as committed Christians. For the young and healthy who participate it becomes a ministry of *diakonia* and for the elderly and sick who are touched it becomes an act of Christ's *koinonia* through the Church.

The fifth evening is devoted to the evangelistic outreach demanded of the people of God, and during this service there is a reaffirmation of one's baptism with the renewal of Baptismal vows. It is during this service that there is a heavy emphasis upon going forth and touching others with the power of Jesus Christ which the members of the congregation possess. If no Mass has been celebrated during the mission then a Mass is celebrated for the concluding session which has a heavy emphasis upon joy and glory and the need to bear the message to all people. Bible teaching on evangelism is underscored and the session ends with the renewal of one's baptismal promises. Baptism, from a Catholic perspective is the basis for all evangelistic work. At such a session one is reminded of the mission of the Church and the mission of each individual Christian. It is recommended strongly that the parishoners enter into one of the service organization of the church and to involve themselves in the outreach ministry of the parish.

Normally during the mission there is a weekday Mass at which I also preach on the Bible Passages appointed for each day. The weekend before the mission begins I preach (10-15 minutes) at each of the Sunday liturgies. I have done as many as 9 liturgies on the weekend to prepare the people for the parish mission. The mission is seen to be one of the major events in the life of the parish and is promoted extensively in the local area before

the preacher's arrival. As you can see there are a number of similarities to a Revival and there are a number of differences. The mission does attract the normal churchgoer who wants to be enlightened and to have a spiritual jolt in his or her life; it attracts the lapsed and the marginal as well. Its purpose is to breathe new life into the parish and to stir the people up to action, worship, and to renew their dedication to a sound spiritual life.

In summation then, the Catholic parish mission is evangelistic outreach to the churchgoer, the marginal Catholic, and to anyone who would desire to appropriate for him or herself the word of God and become a doer and not merely a hearer only (James 1:22). Each Christian tradition has its own methodology, consonant with its proper theological outlook in which to do evangelism ministry. The parish mission is but one of many strategies employed by the Catholic Church to evangelize in the modern world.

## A PEOPLE WHO BELONG

Richard Stoll Armstrong

The theme of this consultation is "A People Who Belong." The title intrigued me: A people who belonged to *what*?

People don't just belong. They belong to something or to *someone*. To belong to something can mean a number of things: it can mean that you are part of it, or that you are committed to it, or that you are *owned* by it.

Webster's International Dictionary gives a number of meanings, including the following: to belong is to be suitable, or appropriate, or advantageous, or to be in a proper situation. I don't think that is what is intended by the theme. Rather it is probably one of these other dictionary definitions listed by Webster: To belong is

- a. to be the property of a person or thing (This pen belongs to me.)
- b. to be attached or bound by allegiance, birth or dependency (I belong to the Armstrong family.)
- c. to be an attribute, part, adjunct or function of a person or thing (This cap belongs to this pen.)
- d. to be properly classified (My name doesn't belong on any list of millionaires.)

I wasn't sure which of these meanings applies, so I have decided to suggest some answers to my own question and to consider the implications of each. You are, first of all, a *people who belong to Christ*. That relationship supersedes and transcends all others. Because you belong to Christ, you share in Christ's mission, which was, as he himself put it, quoting the prophet Isaiah, "to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

The disturbing thing about that incident in the synagogue at Nazareth is that Jesus' own people, the *people to whom he belonged* by birth and heritage, rejected him, when he suggested that God would number some

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foreigners among the elect, while some of those who *thought* they were God's elect would be rejected.

The lesson for us, therefore, is that the people who truly belong to Christ are those who accept Christ's words and do Christ's will. "You are my friends," said Jesus, "if you do what I command you."

You are a people who belong—to Christ! You are also a *people who belong to a particular religious tradition*. To belong to the Reformed Church in America means something. You are part of the Reformed family of churches. You hold certain traditions and tenets in common, and they hold you together with other Reformed and Presbyterian denominations as a community of faith, a people who belong *by choice* to a particular religious tradition, and more narrowly to a particular denomination.

But within that tradition you are also a *people who belong to each other*. You are a people with common interests, common concerns, common needs. You are Pacific and Asian Americans. You are not all alike, but you have much in common, and what you have in common forms your identity as a community of people within the wider community. As people who belong to each other, you don't own each other, but you *need* each other. You are not each other's property, but you are each other's brother or sister. You are not necessarily bound to each other by a common birth, but you are voluntarily bound to each other by a common faith. You may not have formed a common alliance on every issue, but you have sworn a common allegiance to the same Lord.

At the same time you are a *people who belong to your own heritage*. You represent many different cultural traditions and nationalities. You are all the same, but that fact is in itself a bond which you share; for though you differ from each other in many respects you are all pilgrim people who have left the home of your ancestors to move to this wild and wonderful land called America.

What you have in common is not the same heritage, but the same experience of being an immigrant people in a foreign country. You face a common challenge of cultural shock and assimilation. You share a common bond of living on the edge of society for a time, a common theology of marginality, a common experience of ethnic self-consciousness, all of which experiences help you to feel like a people who belong to each other, yet who realize you have your own unique traditions, your own roots, which are not the same as those of others among the Pacific and Asian American people to whom you also belong.

You are a people who belong to your own heritage, to the Reformed tradition, to each other and to Christ. Need I mention that you are also a people who belong, *by adoption*, to a new society, a new culture, a new country, a new home—a *people who belong to America*.

You are not owned by America, but you are part of America. Your roots may not be deep in American soil, but your heart can be deep in the American dream, the dream that you can help bring into reality, not only for yourself, but for others as well.

You have not been absorbed into the melting pot that America was said to be, but you have become an important ingredient in the "tossed salad"

that America now is. You are indeed a people who belong, and therein lies your challenge, as you seek faithfully to proclaim and beat the cross of Christ. Conflicting loyalties are always a challenge to faithfulness.

Let me explain. When it comes to proclaiming good news to the poor and release to the captives, do you see yourselves doing that just to Asian or Pacific Americans like you, or do you see yourselves proclaiming the gospel also to people who are *not* Asian or Pacific Americans—people who are *not* like you, people who *don't* belong? Is your missionary focus narrow or broad? Exclusive or inclusive?

I realize that is not an easy question to answer. There are many issues involved. One has to do with the so-called "homogeneous unit principle," whose advocates assert that people do not want to cross racial, linguistic, cultural or class lines in order to become Christians or to join a particular church. According to this principle, therefore, we should not try to evangelize people who are not like us. A corollary to that conclusion would be that ethnic churches should not try to evangelize people from the surrounding culture. In other words, ethnic churches exist only for their ethnic group.

It may be true that people are not eager to associate with those who are different from themselves, but is it right not to invite them? If so, then loyalty to each other has clouded our loyalty to Christ. I recognize the need for and the importance of ethnic churches as a temporary expediency, and I understand the validity of the homogeneous unit principle as a description of the way people are. But is it not a contradiction of St. Paul's great affirmation of our oneness in Christ? "For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God," said Paul. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Do we not believe that the love of Christ can transcend all human barriers? Jesus did not say to Peter, "On this rock I will build my homogeneous unit!" I know it is important for first generation Americans to have churches where they can worship in ways that are familiar. But what about third generation Americans? What happens when your grandchildren are assimilated into the American culture and embrace its language, its customs, its rituals?

Please understand that I am not at all advocating the abandonment of your cultural traditions and religious values. Indeed, it is important that they be remembered and celebrated. A moment ago I referred to America as a salad bowl. I have never liked the melting pot metaphor, because the ingredients of a melting pot lose their identity. Their individuality is absorbed into the amorphous contents of the pot. I much prefer the image of a salad bowl, in which the ingredients retain their identity and their individuality, but all are part of the one "tossed salad" and together constitute its strength and its value. All of us Americans are in the salad bowl together. We all have our ethnic roots, having either descended from or having ourselves been immigrants. The only native Americans are those who dwelt here before the first settlers ever set foot on this continent. And by the way, the ancestors of the American Indians were immigrants, too!

The challenge to Pacific and Asian American churches, therefore, is to maintain the proper balance between your traditional ways and your contemporary surroundings, between the customs of the old country and the culture of a new society; between what is familiar to the first generation and what is relevant to the third generation. It is the challenge of being faithful to the past and open to the future, of celebrating your heritage while demonstrating your openness, of affirming your Pacific or Asian roots while spreading your American branches. It is the call to minister to your own people while reaching out to others, to be a haven *within* the community while striving to be part of the community.

As a people who belong to Christ here in America, therefore, part of your mission is to help evangelize this country, not just Pacific and Asian immigrants, not just unchurched Taiwanese, or Koreans, or Filipinos, but any and all unchurched Americans. That means proclaiming the gospel to the nominal Christians who profess Jesus with their lips but deny him with their lives. It means proclaiming the gospel to the shallow Christians who display their faith on billboards and bumper stickers but not in their dealings with others. It means proclaiming the gospel to the hypocritical Christians who have Jesus' name often on their tongues but seldom in their hearts.

But, as I say, that's not easy for an ethnic church to do. The first and most obvious problem is the language barrier. You can't proclaim the gospel to people who don't understand your language. Without communication proclamation is useless. How will you communicate with your non-Asian neighbors? One way is to speak through an interpreter. Another and better way is to learn the language of the people among whom you are living.

Another difficulty is the cultural factor. How do you reach out to people whose style of worship and religious customs may be quite different from your own. The solution is not to abandon your own traditions. The solution is to interpret and explain them in ways that will help others to understand and appreciate them. Remember: you belong to America as well as to Asia or the Pacific.

Another conflict of loyalties for a people who belong is the tension between being Asian members of the Reformed Church in America and RCA Asians. You are not just one or the other; you are both, and the challenge is to maintain a healthy balance between the two loyalties. As Asian RCAs you have much to teach and share with the rest of the RCA family: your music, your liturgies, your customs, your faith.

As RCA Asians you also have something to offer your Asian American brothers and sisters here and abroad: solid Reformed theology, an understanding of the sovereignty of God and the providence of God, a commitment to the ministry of the word and sacraments, an appreciation of what it means to be an ordered church with a representative form of government. You can be an example to other immigrant churches, as you continue to explore the meaning of your pilgrimage in America in the light of the theology of marginality.

There is also the tension between belonging to a particular religious tradition and belonging to the body of Christ, between denominational loyalty and ecumenical commitment. America is a pluralistic society, probably the most pluralistic society in the world, where religious tolerance is an expected virtue and religious freedom is a constitutional right. Religious bigotry is unacceptable to fair-minded people. How, then, do a people who belong proclaim the gospel in such a society? How can you do evangelism in a pluralistic world? Can you be committed to evangelism and to pluralism at the same time? Some people would argue that you can't! Others would say that you have to limit your evangelism to your own kind. There is a better answer, however, and it has to do with the authority, the integrity, the service, the humility and the sensitivity of those who belong to Christ.

The authority of your proclamation is the message itself. Your words have authority because they are Christ's words. You speak as Christ's representatives.

Your integrity derives from your faithfulness to the Lord you represent. Integrity is not a matter of techniques and programs and gimmicks that work. Integrity has to do with faith and commitment and people who care. Everyone is looking for evangelism techniques; but techniques without integrity are worthless. Everyone is concerned about church growth; but numerical growth without spiritual growth is a meaningless statistic. There is too much interest in how to be successful and not enough concern about how to be faithful. You and I are not recruiters for a religious country club. You belong to Christ, who bids those who would be his disciples to take up a cross and follow him.

To proclaim the gospel in a pluralistic world has to do also and especially with service, for evangelism involves much more than merely talking about Jesus. Those who belong to Christ are servants of Christ, who came himself as a suffering servant. Their proclamation of the gospel, therefore, must reflect the love and compassion of those who recognize themselves to be the servant people of God. It is the service of those who belong to Christ that wins them the right to be heard. Our God is a God who identifies with the poor and the oppressed, and those who give bread to the hungry and drink to the thirsty are giving it to Christ, who came to preach good news to the poor and release to the captives, and liberation to the oppressed.

But having won the right to be heard, those who belong to Christ know they must speak with humility, for as proclaimers of the gospel they are merely channels not the source of faith. God is the converter of human hearts, not you and I. We are merely instruments God uses to bestow the gift of faith on whomever God wills. We are interpreters of the life of faith, not the bestowers of it. The bestower of faith is God. It behooves those who belong to Christ, therefore, to be humble.

It behooves them also to be sensitive to others. There is an appropriate style of evangelism for every time and place. There is a time to speak and a time to be silent, and those who belong to Christ have to be sensitive enough to know the difference. Sensitive people are good listeners. They know they are called to witness for Christ not to argue about Christ.

So, my Asian American brothers and sisters in Christ, I charge you to take seriously your claim and your call to be a people who belong. Take up the cross of helping to evangelize America! Proclaim the gospel with the authority of the Christ to whom you belong. Speak with the integrity of your own faith experience.

Speak and act as servants of him who came not to be served but to serve. Speak and act with the humility of those who know that faith is the gift of God, that we have this treasure in earthen vessels, and that apart from Christ we can do nothing. Speak and act with the sensitivity of those who know they must win the right to be heard, but having won it, are not afraid or ashamed to declare the whole gospel of Christ, the social gospel as well as the personal gospel. Speak and act with a vision inspired by God of an inclusive ministry in a pluralistic world, for that is what your evangelism must represent, if you take seriously your claim to belong to him who prayed to his heavenly Father that we might all be one.

May God inspire and equip you to be a people who belong, proclaiming the gospel and bearing the cross of Christ.

## EVANGELISM IN THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXT

Charles Van Engen

It was May of 1985, and the pastors and elders of the Presbytery of Chiapas came to see us off. They represented some of the fastest-growing churches in the world. The president of the presbytery offered these words: "Go now as missionaries sent by the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico to the church in the United States. We understand that for some time now our sister church, the Reformed Church in America, has not been growing in its membership. Go now to them for us, and teach them how to evangelize their country the way we have learned to do it here."

The words of his commission have stayed with me. And the profound irony is worth noting. The circle is being completed. Christians throughout North America now need the perspectives and advice of our brothers and sisters from the Third World to give us new insight and urgency in bringing the gospel to our people in a new and exciting way. In this article I will introduce you to a number of Third World Christians and will show how they can help us see both the obstacles and the opportunities for evangelism in the North American context.

### Obstacles

We need to consider soberly the obstacles uniquely facing us in the evangelization of North America. Clearly there is not enough space here to deal in an exhaustive way with all the major cultural issues. Rather, I want to highlight broadly some of the obstacles most often identified by Third World Christians as being especially true of our situation in North America. They tend to fall into two major categories: obstacles in our culture and obstacles in our churches.

#### *Obstacles in Our Culture*

There are certain built-in obstructions in our cultural setting which must be squarely faced, understood, dealt with, and overcome in order for the gospel to impact North America. Here I will mention only three.

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*No need for help from God:* I remember crossing the U.S.-Mexico border in the Spring of 1983 on our way to the Reformed Church Women's Triennial at Hope College. In the car were two women from Chiapas who had been very active in evangelism there over the past several decades, Amelia and Rebecca. As we rode through the luxurious cities and countryside of southern Texas, they commented: "It appears that these people don't need God." I asked them what they meant. They responded that in their own situation they needed God daily in dealing with the presence of extreme poverty, the lack of physical safety, constant job insecurity, uncertainties regarding housing and food, daily family crises, and a general lack of control over their own destiny. But the people of North America don't appear to need God because insurance companies take care of accidents and other crises, unemployment compensation cares for the unemployed, and school systems look after nearly everyone's basic education. In short, health, welfare, and the pursuit of happiness are given secular answers, though they in fact entail spiritual questions.

As we rode, we talked more. Amelia went on to observe: "It appears that in this culture there is no space for God. People appear busy with family, work, recreation, social life, and the personal pursuit of wealth. Where, then, is there space for God? It appears that God is restricted to a narrow part of life which has to do with matters of illness and personal crisis." Amelia added, "It is no wonder so many people in this country seem to think they can do without God."

Having seen our culture through their eyes, I began carefully to take note of the arenas of life mentioned during congregational prayer time. Is it not true that our need for God is narrowed to matters of health and personal crisis—with a political or global issue thrown in once in a while? Whole arenas of life like food, clothing, housing, education, work, recreation, social relationships, finances, and personal moral choices—matters which are commonly subjects of prayer in other cultures—are seldom mentioned in our own prayer times.

*No need for public faith:* A society that narrows its need for God soon separates issues of faith from public life. In 1980 I attended the Reformed Church in America (RCA) Ecumenical Consultation in New York. While there, I spoke with an Arab Christian who emphasized this to me: "In the Middle East our religious affiliation is a public matter, highly visible, politically significant, and publicly demonstrated, Islam forces us in that direction. Though that creates severe religious, social, and political tensions, I sometimes think it is easier to deal with than this culture, where in terms of public demonstration you cannot guess the religious affiliation of many of the people around you."

What a different perspective from that of my friend Dirk, a milkman from Monnickendam, the Netherlands. I sat in his living room in 1981 and listened to him expound at length on how religious faith and religious affiliation are a matter of taste and personal preference. Influenced strongly by a Western world-view, Dirk showed me two bottles of wine, one white and one red. "Some people like white wine, others like red," Dirk explained. "You like Reformed Christianity; my brother Hans likes

the Seventh Day Adventists; I like no religion at all. You see, each individual should be free to choose whatever is his/her personal preference, and we will respect each other's choice."

This "live-and-let-live" thinking is valued highly in our North American culture, and we would probably find people inside and outside the church supporting it very strongly. In fact it is a contradiction of the very heart of the gospel which speaks of one God who created all people, one Jesus Christ with authority over all creation at whose name every knee shall one day bow, and one Spirit who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. (See, e.g., Matt. 28, Col. 1, Rom. 5-6, Phil. 2, John 16:8)

Lesslie Newbigin has written a masterful, philosophical analysis of this phenomenon in *Foolishness to the Greeks*. The Western cultural worldview, Newbigin says, has created a dichotomy between two spheres, one represented by our culture, the other found in the gospel. On the one hand is the "public" sphere of scientific rationality, cause-effect explanations, observable and demonstrable facts, and truth-claims measurable by an appeal to a rational and contingent (constantly changing) universe. On the other hand, the culture has relegated religious experience to the "private" sphere of personal opinion and values, private concepts of faith, and individual choice of a religious life-style. But in fact the gospel is unavoidably public, the "spiritual" is an integral part of our history. Our message is one of hope that there is reason, purpose, and direction to our history because God is in control, and this message is public, truthful fact. The gospel must be allowed to impact, question, shape, and transform science, economics, politics, logical reasoning, and Western cultural values.<sup>1</sup>

The individualization and privatization of religious belief in North America constitute major obstacles to the evangelization of North America. Particularly strong in culture-affirming denominations, it takes away their vitality and robs them of the urgency of communicating the gospel in our context. Our desperate fear of anything that smells of "propaganda" and "proselytism" is a direct result of the privatization of our religion. Other religious movements in our midst seem to have no such fear. We who worship the God of the universe and Jesus Christ in whom all things subsist need not fear a public demonstration of our faith.

*No need for radical conversion:* A third obstacle is even more pervasive and subtle. A non-Christian medical doctor in Tapachula, Chiapas, Mexico, who had done extensive study in the United States, presented this issue to me. He spoke of the fact that in the United States people seem to be constantly bombarded by religious literature, radio and television programs, and church presentations. He then spoke of the law of diminishing returns in medicine, that is, of cases of deafness caused by too much noise and blindness caused by too much light. "I believe," he said, "that religious over-kill in the United States has produced similar reactions on a personal and spiritual plane." He was pointing to a very significant obstacle which, to some extent, arises from our own evangelistic and revivalist history.

This bombardment of evangelistic preachers is especially deafening to the North American audience because they are not challenged to respond to what they hear. As O'Connell and Gallup have observed:

We boast Christianity as our faith, but many of us have not bothered to learn the basic biblical facts about this religion. Many of us dutifully attend church, but this act in itself appears to have made us no less likely than our unchurched brethren to engage in unethical behavior.

We say we are Christians, but sometimes we do not show much love toward those who do not share our particular religious perspective. We say we rejoice in the good news that Jesus brought, but we are often strangely reluctant to share the gospel with others . . .

We say we are *believers*, but perhaps we are only *assenters*.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, North American mainline religiosity has not transformed practice and, correspondingly, culture. It has been strongly culture-affirming, blurring the distinction between Christian and non-Christian and lessening the impact of conversion in the life of the individual and the church. In other cultures conversion to Jesus Christ often means a radical change in the life of the individual, a radical distinction between church and society, and a strong differentiation between those who are Christian and those who are not. These distinctions seem to aid the impact of evangelization as long as they are positively transformational rather than being so sectarian and counter-cultural that they are considered "foreign" or "irrelevant" to the surrounding culture.<sup>3</sup>

### *Obstacles in Our Churches*

In evangelizing North America we need to be aware of obstacles found in our churches. Here we will highlight two: an unclear task and an unclear faith. These further obscure our presentation of the gospel amidst North American neo-pagan culture.

*Our task is unclear:* Last year a pastor from Taiwan studying at Western Theological Seminary emphasized the fact that in his perception North Americans did not seem to know what the word "evangelism" means. He questioned how we could speak about evangelizing North America without having a clear definition of what the task was. I think his question is important. One of our greatest internal obstacles during the last several decades seems to be our lack of clarity in defining evangelism. Ever since the Fundamentalist-Modernist debates of the 1920s and 1930s a discussion has raged in North America concerning the meaning, means, and message of evangelism. And the uncertainty which the debate has produced has been severely detrimental to enthusiasm, commitment, and cooperation in the practice of evangelism, particularly among mainline denominations. The misunderstanding continues up to the present.<sup>4</sup> As Darrell Guder has put it: "The term evangelism has become highly

misunderstandable, precisely because of all the meanings attached to it. It creates barriers for some and awakens such concrete associations for others that discussion of it almost always requires a long process of terminological clarification."<sup>5</sup>

Our uncertainty with regard to a definition has contributed to strong negative images on the part of the members of our churches. During the past two years I have had the opportunity of asking pastors and Western Seminary students to describe the feelings, impressions, and memories which the word "evangelism" conjures up for them. Their responses have been overwhelmingly negative. Images of manipulative techniques, of decision cards never followed up, of door-to-door intruders, of sidewalk confrontations, and of ranting TV and radio evangelists have produced a strong negative reaction to the concept of doing evangelism, and a strong deterrent to participation on the part of our pastors and church members. It has been interesting to observe during the evangelism classes taught at Western Seminary that when people are helped to get beyond those negative images to gain a positive and biblical view of evangelism they become overwhelmingly positive, participatory, and activist.

There is hope for future clarification. The beginning of a major convergence may be seen among the ecumenical movement, the Roman Catholic Church, and the conservative evangelicals. One need only compare, for example, the fine statement on evangelism issued recently by the World Council of Churches, "Mission and Evangelism—An Ecumenical Affirmation,"<sup>6</sup> with our own "Evangelism in Reformed Perspective: An Evangelism Manifesto,"<sup>7</sup> the Lausanne Covenant,<sup>8</sup> and the papal exhortation, "Evangelii Nuntiandi,"<sup>9</sup> to see this convergence beginning to take shape.

In the spring of 1987 theologians representing the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, and the World Evangelical Fellowship met in Stuttgart, West Germany, to discuss this matter. The result was a very significant nine-page joint statement on evangelism. Quoting from *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*, the statement affirms that,

The Church is sent into the world to call people and nations to repentance, to announce the forgiveness of sin and a new beginning in relation with God and with neighbors through Jesus Christ. This evangelistic calling has a new urgency today . . . The proclamation of the Gospel includes an invitation to recognize and accept in a personal decision the saving lordship of Christ. It is the announcement of a personal encounter, mediated by the Holy Spirit, with the living Christ, receiving his forgiveness and making a personal acceptance of the call to discipleship and a new life of service.<sup>10</sup>

One of the participants at Stuttgart was Professor David Bosch from South Africa, who recently set forth what I consider to be one of the most

clearly articulated perspectives of this convergent view of evangelism. He offered the following definition: "Evangelism may be defined as that dimension and activity of the church's mission which seeks to offer every person, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged by the gospel of explicit faith in Jesus Christ, with a view to embracing him as Savior, becoming a living member of his community, and being enlisted in his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth."<sup>11</sup> Bosch's definition could possibly be accepted by people from all three perspectives—Roman Catholic, Ecumenical, and Evangelical. If such a convergence became a reality in the thinking of North American Christians as a whole, a major internal obstacle to the evangelization of North America might be removed.

*Our faith is unclear:* A few years ago Rev. Jorge López, a pastor from the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico, spent several quarters living in Western Michigan and attending Western Theological Seminary. Upon his return to Chiapas, he commented that he found our church members to be weak in their knowledge of the Bible, uncommitted to the church's programs, and passive in their evangelistic outreach. At first I thought his critique rather severe. But the last few years have taught me otherwise. We seem to be suffering from a kind of biblical anorexia which my dictionary tells me is a "loss of appetite," often due to prolonged periods of not eating properly. Robert Bast mentions the recent Schuller Ministries/Gallup survey as finding a general "lack of knowledge of basic biblical facts, a lack of love toward those who do not share our religious perspective, a reluctance to share the good news with others, and a failure to do much about the problems of poverty and hunger."<sup>12</sup> The Luidens/Nemeth survey of RCA membership demonstrated that our unique beliefs expressed in the *Standards of the Reformed Church in America* are also considered unimportant by a large portion of our membership.<sup>13</sup>

It is a given fact in evangelism that you cannot share what you do not have. Lack of clarity in matters of Scripture and faith produces a lack of enthusiasm and in fact a real avoidance of personally sharing our faith. Our reluctance to participate in evangelism is obvious. Few pastors in the RCA consider their primary calling to be evangelizing the unchurched, and few members view sharing their faith to be their major spiritual activity. A look at our congregational budgets readily illustrates the low priority assigned to evangelism. Staff salaries, building maintenance, and programs for the members themselves far out-weigh the amount of time, effort and money allocated for evangelism. Major congregational programs like Bethel and Stephen's Ministries are targeted primarily for present church members rather than the unchurched. Kenneth Chafin, a Southern Baptist pastor and dean of the Billy Graham Schools of Evangelism, put it bluntly: "The average congregation has little meaningful contact with those who are not Christian."<sup>14</sup> It seems that concern for the preservation of our history, traditions, and church life obscures our commitment to the fact that "God so loved the world (note, it does not say 'the church') that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16).

The obstacles we have noted above are not new, nor are they insurmountable. Neither should they discourage us. Effective evangelism is neither magic nor miraculous—but just plain hard work, and we must work to remove these obstacles in order to take advantage of the magnificent opportunities for evangelism in the North American context. Nowhere in the world are such opportunities so readily available to local congregations as they are in North America. Nowhere are there greater possibilities for impacting a culture with the gospel.

## Opportunities

Christians from the Third World often remark about the fantastic range of evangelistic resources available to us in North America. These opportunities may be found both in the culture at large and in the church.

### *Positive Cultural Receptivity*

In 1985 Robert Bellah and his associates published a very significant study which pointed to the essential role of Christianity in American culture. Basing their research on a massive five-year study of various American communities, the authors affirm that personal faith in its various expressions is essential for North American society and is sought by many as a source of meaning in their lives<sup>15</sup>

The study done by the Schuller Ministries and the Gallup Organization which we noted earlier also points to the incredible potential of evangelism in North America.

The prospect for deepening America's spiritual commitment is far from hopeless. Virtually all Americans are, in some measure, drawn to the person of Jesus Christ. . . . Many believe he is the Son of God, and even many among the nondevout feel that Jesus' life and person tell us something profound about the meaning of existence. And, remarkably, as many as 9 in 10 say that Jesus as a moral and ethical leader has had at least some impact upon their lives.

Furthermore, at least half of Americans wish their religious faith were stronger, and a perhaps surprising one fifth of non-believers say they would like to believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ . . .

A remarkable 4 in 10 Americans have an intuitive or experiential basis for their belief and report a dramatic religious experience . . . And 7 in 10 of all survey respondents feel that their relationship with Jesus Christ is deepening.<sup>16</sup>

Christians in Third World countries do not have this kind of positive cultural background for evangelism. On the contrary, their contexts call invariably for radical encounter with other faiths which do not accept

belief in Jesus Christ. Why are we not capitalizing on such remarkable receptivity?

### *Freedom, Finances, and Forms for Mass Evangelism*

The general cultural receptivity looks even brighter when the freedom of proclamation found in North America coupled with the freedom of individuals to change their faith is considered. Add to this the money, people, and programs available for Christian literature, mass-media, videos, and so forth—and the possibilities skyrocket. The multimillions handled by television evangelists are not only a scandal, they also demonstrate the fantastic potential open to evangelists, pastors, and churches which wish to impact North America for Jesus Christ.

Compare that with a little radio program in Tapachula, Chiapas, Mexico. For two years we were able to have a one-half hour program of Christian music and a brief sermon. What a tremendous amount of energy it took for Pascual, the brother in charge of the program, to gather the necessary money and people to cover that one-half hour! Then came the fateful day when the radio station told Pascual that the Mexican government had decreed that no radio stations in Mexico would again be allowed to broadcast religious programs. All Protestant radio broadcasts were silenced that day and have not resumed. How well I remember Pascual lamenting the fact that the freedoms and resources available to Christians on this side of the border were not available to him or the churches on that side. "What couldn't we do here if we had the resources and freedom available to Christians there," he said.

### *Myriad Relational Bridges*

In the midst of such general cultural receptivity and potential resources, a third major opportunity is being increasingly emphasized by evangelists in North America. In every community one can plot where a given congregation's target population lies. It is to be found in the thousands of close and casual, formal and informal personal relationships which church members have with the unchurched in the community. It does not take much work to find the businesses, recreational arenas, neighborhoods, schools, and networks of friendships impacted by the members of a congregation. Here are the most fruitful bridges for evangelizing North America. It is a proven fact that about 80 percent of all new church members originally came to the church because of a previous friendship with a member of that congregation.<sup>17</sup>

### *Research, Data, Consultation, and Training*

A pastor from Kenya was recently one of my students. He had been in the United States only a short time. One of his most telling comments had to do with the research and consulting resources which North American churches have to aid them in evangelism. "If we only had usable

data to know who lives where in our country, how many there are, what needs they have, and how we can serve them. If we had such data I'm sure our church would be growing ten times faster than it is." His church presently is growing by about 30 percent each year. I wonder what their growth rate would be if the pastor in fact had the kind of data he desired!

We have those kinds of resources at our fingertips. Church consulting and training groups like the Alban Institute, the American Institute of Church Growth, the Yokefellow Institute, the Fuller Evangelistic Association, and the Billy Graham Schools of Evangelism, are there to be tapped for consultation and research. Evangelism programs like Evangelism Explosion, Good News People, Life-Style Evangelism (Joseph Aldrich), and Night of Caring/Sharing (Paul Cedar) are but a few of the many resources available to churches. Discipleship Ministries, led by Rev. David Bruininks, and based in Holland, Michigan, is specifically designed to train the church's membership in discipleship and personal evangelism. The Reverend Robert Bast, Minister of Evangelism and Church Life, has launched "On the Way," a program designed to equip congregations committed to evangelism and growth. There is in fact no reason why a congregation which wants to reach out to help evangelize North America cannot do so. There are plenty of consultants willing to help. Much depends on whether the members of a congregation are personally committed to live out their evangelistic calling. George Hunter says it this way:

Faithful, reproducing congregations are the laboratories of the living God. In such churches, the God who acts in history is showing his whole church the ways forward . . . Through data collection and case studies, we can discover the approaches and methods God is blessing to reach the undisciplined, and we may barely have scratched the surface. More reproducible principles and strategies are waiting to be discovered in churches already experiencing apostolic growth.<sup>18</sup>

The evangelization of North America is not optional—it is the reason we exist, it is commanded by our Lord, and it is urgently needed for the sake of righteousness and reconciliation. What a marvelous gift from God! Our participation in God's mission makes us instruments through whom the nations of the earth may be blessed. In the final analysis evangelism is people sharing with people the love and grace of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. Third World Christians live this out in marvelous ways under severe pressures. Already more than half of all Christians live in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Many predict that by the year 2000 the percentage of Christians on those continents will have risen dramatically, while the percentage of Christians in Europe and North America will have dwindled even further. I wonder if there is a way of responding to and off-setting those predictions?

Well, it is now 1987 and I am left with the commission given me by my Mexican brothers and sisters. Can we in North America learn enough

from Christians in the Third World to reverse the trends? Will we allow them to challenge us to evangelize our neo-pagan continent? Third World Christians labor against tremendous economic, social, political, and religious odds, and still continue to grow in the evangelization of their people. Can we do less? Will we let them help us? I wonder.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968).

<sup>2</sup>George Gallup, Jr. and George O'Connell, *Who Do Americans Say That I Am?* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), pp. 88-89 (emphasis theirs).

<sup>3</sup>There has been much discussion around this point ever since Richard Niebuhr published *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951). In fact very few clear conclusions have emerged. See, e.g., Dean Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches are Growing* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Dean R. Hoge and David A. Roozen, *Understanding Church Growth and Decline* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979); Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979); and David Roozen, William McKinney, and Jackson Carroll, *Varieties of Religious Presence: Mission in Public Life* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1984), for differing perspectives on this issue.

<sup>4</sup>An example of a recent attempt at such clarity can be found in the April-June, 1987 "Monthly Letter on Evangelism" from the World Council of Churches. There a portion of an address given in March, 1985, by James Burtness (Professor of Systematic Theology at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.) is reproduced. The article reflects on Matt. 16:13-16 and states: "1. Jesus is the question" and "2. Christ is an answer."

<sup>5</sup>Darrell L. Guder, *Be My Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 134.

<sup>6</sup>The statement was published in the United States as, *Mission and Evangelism—An Ecumenical Affirmation: A Study Guide for Congregations* (New York: NCC, 1983).

<sup>7</sup>Written by William Brownson and Carl Kromminga, the manifesto was published by both *The Church Herald* and *The Banner* in 1977. See also "The Call to Evangelize," *Minutes of the General Synod*, RCA, 1985, pp. 225f., which draws heavily from the "Manifesto."

<sup>8</sup>The Covenant has appeared in many places. See, e.g., *International Review of Mission*, 63 (1974), 570-576.

<sup>9</sup>This was issued by Pope Paul VI in December, 1975 and entitled, "Evangelization in the Modern World." Strongly reflecting the documents of Vatican Council II, it is considered by Roman Catholics and Protestants alike to be basic to present Roman Catholic understanding of evangelization. See also "Lumen Gentium," "Unitatis Redintegratio," and "Ad Gentes Divinitus" in *Documents of Vatican II*, A. P. Flannery, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), *in loco*.

<sup>10</sup>"Statement of Stuttgart Consultation on Evangelism," March 23-27, 1987, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup>David Bosch, "Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross-currents Today," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 11 (1987), 103. Richard Armstrong of Princeton recently compiled twenty different definitions of evangelism and gives us a very helpful chapter dealing with this issue: *The Pastor as Evangelist* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984) pp. 21ff.

<sup>12</sup>Robert Bast, "Good News" newsletter of the General Program Council, RCA, August, 1987.

Bast is quoting from Gallup and O'Connell, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>13</sup>Donald Luidens and Roger Nemeth, "The RCA Today," *The Church Herald*, January 6, 1987, pp. 5-7; January 20, 1987, pp. 12-14; and March 20, 1987, pp. 11-14. See also *The Grand Rapids Press*, February 28, 1987, pp. D1 and D4.

<sup>14</sup>Kenneth Chafin, "Evangelism and the Local Church," in *Evangelism: The Next Ten Years*, Sherwood E. Wirt, ed. (Waco: Word, 1978), p. 120.

<sup>15</sup>See Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).

<sup>16</sup>Gallup and O'Connell, *op. cit.*, p. 89. Robert Bast, RCA Minister of Evangelism and Church Life also noted these incredibly positive observations in his letter on evangelism, "Good News," August, 1987.

<sup>17</sup>The vast potential of the relational networks of our church members has been emphasized by many lately. See, e.g., George Hunter, *To Spread the Power* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987); *A Guide to Evangelism*, Clive Calver, et al. ed. (London: Marshalls, 1984); William Hinson, *A Place to Dig In: Doing Evangelism in the Local Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987); and Joseph Aldrick, *Life-Style Evangelism* (Portland: Multnomah, 1981).

<sup>18</sup>George Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 31. Hunter wrote an earlier book that is very helpful for congregational evangelism: *The Contagious Congregation: Frontiers in Evangelism and Church Growth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979).

# THE CURSILLO/WALK TO EMMAUS MOVEMENT

## An Apostolic Model

Ronald K. Crandall

*TIME* magazine, in a Religion article entitled "Those Mainline Blues," recently announced "America's Old Guard Protestant churches confront an unprecedented decline . . . Nor is there any upswing in sight."<sup>1</sup> The article described the now familiar story of the 18 to 43% membership decline of several mainline Protestant denominations over the last two decades, and then added:

The Mainline plight might be understandable if all of U. S. Christendom were reeling under the shocks of secularism and the inroads of new, alien faiths. But that is not the case. During the past two decades, black Protestant groups have gained. Roman Catholic membership has grown a solid 16%, and the boom in the conservative evangelical churches (including Fundamentalists, Pentecostals and charismatics) has caused some to envision a religious revival.<sup>2</sup>

What John Wesley observed and feared about the decline of the Anglican revival known as "Methodism" has repeatedly come to pass as great renewal movements have cooled, lost sight of their original "doctrine, spirit, and discipline," become overly institutionalized, and concentrated more on maintenance and survival than on spiritual transformation and expansion.<sup>3</sup> The Church of England in Wesley's day needed renewal. Mainline churches in America today need renewal. Are there signs of hope? I am convinced there are several. But I am particularly interested in a relatively new renewal movement of Roman Catholicism which has now spread to mainline Protestant churches. This movement is usually known as *Cursillo*, and one of its ecumenical forms which has captured my own interest is known as the *Walk To Emmaus*.

### Cursillo/Emmaus History

The roots of the *Cursillo de Cristiandad* ("short course in Christianity") movement go back to the island of Majorca some 170 miles southeast of

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the mainland of Spain in the Mediterranean Sea. The years of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) were a time of ferment and upheaval for the Catholic church in Spain. During this period a lay leader of the "Young Men's Branch of the Catholic Action" (similar to youth fellowships in other denominations) planned a pilgrimage from Majorca to the Shrine of St. James de Compostela at Santiago, Spain. The pilgrimage was intended to be a time for young men to discover a more personal experience of Christ and to rededicate themselves to the apostolate.

In preparation for this pilgrimage the leaders decided to offer a short course ("cursillo") on the meaning of life in Christ and responding to God's call. The initial pilgrimage was postponed as Spain and the rest of the world became involved in World War II. In hope, they continued to prepare using the cursillo model year by year; but it wasn't until the summer of 1948 that the pilgrimage actually became a reality. In the years of preparation, however, Father Sebastian Gaya and Eduardo Bonnin, the lay director, noticed that much of the renewal they had hoped for had already taken place—through the *Cursillos*. In 1947 a new bishop, Juan Hervas, who had been deeply involved internationally with Catholic Action and the lay apostolate, arrived in Majorca. He too immediately saw the potential of the approach, and worked with Bonnin, Gaya and Father Juan Capo to launch what was to become the *Cursillo* movement. The first three-day *Cursillo* in a form similar to what is used today was held in the monastery of San Honorato on the island of Majorca, Spain, on January 7, 1949.

Though some opposed this new program, *Cursillo* could not be contained and continued to flourish. In a few short years it became a world-wide movement reaching out to more than fifty countries in Europe, Central and South America, Africa, Asia, Australia and North America. The first *Cursillo* in the United States was brought in 1957 by two Spanish Air Cadets who were studying at Lackland Air Force Base near San Antonio, Texas. In the early 1960's the format of the three days and the talks given were translated into English; and as the Roman Catholic English *Cursillos* developed, the model was shared with other Christian traditions who began to develop their own *Cursillos*.

In the mid-1970's, Robert R. Wood, a United Methodist pastor in Peoria, Illinois, became involved in the unusually ecumenical Roman Catholic *Cursillo* in the town. About the same time, several members of the staff of The Upper Room in Nashville, Tennessee attended a Lutheran *Cursillo* in Miami, Florida and determined to launch an ecumenical *Cursillo* through The Upper Room. Robert Wood was contacted to be the Spiritual Director (clergy leader) for two model weekends held in April and May, 1977. After the successful completion of these two events, Wood was asked to join the staff of The Upper Room and develop The Upper Room *Cursillo*, which in 1981 became *The Upper Room Walk to Emmaus*. Currently there are over one hundred Emmaus Communities in four countries, and each year fifteen to twenty thousand "pilgrims" experience renewal for Christian leadership and witness through the *Walk to Emmaus* movement.

## Cursillo Theology and Perspective

Christianity at its core is both transformational and apostolic. Certainly both emphases can be seen in the following theological and philosophical rationale of the Roman Catholic *Cursillo* movement as set forth in its official publication *The Fundamental Ideas Of The Cursillo*.

[We] need not only a partial and individualistic solution, but a transformation of the environment that embraces everyone and everything. The whole world must be restored from its foundation. It must be transformed from being savage into being human and from being human into the divine.<sup>4</sup>

The world is given to Christians as their mission . . . One has to define clearly what one may call the fundamental ideas in the ideological center of the Cursillo Movement . . . They are:

- a) A dynamic vision of the Christian apostolate, understanding this apostolate not as a luxury but as a requirement in a life that, far from organizing itself bureaucratically, constitutes the cutting edge of God's kingdom, the living working yeast of the Church.
- b) A victorious and confident concept of Christianity, which is the only true and precise one, representing Christianity as the solution to all human problems. . .
- c) A feeling of restlessness which is sincere, honest, and hopeful.
- d) A profound and precise knowledge of persons as they are today and their problems and anguish; but an experiential knowledge, alive, taken not from static formulas nor from 'simple and theoretical manuals,' but learned from daily life, born from living the common life with the people whom the leaven of the Gospel must inspire.
- e) A profound conviction of the inadequacy and limitations of certain methods to obtain the essential objective of any apostolic action, convinced that allowing ourselves merely to lament or be resigned to the way things are, we would be moved to vitalize with growing interest everything within our reach and seek new and fruitful horizons.
- f) A firm conviction that it is really possible for all who live at the edge of religion to feel the strong jolt of grace and that no matter how far away from Christ they may be, they can still give themselves entirely to him, if the things of Christ and of his Church are presented to them as they are in themselves. . .
- g) The firm hope that, in living this experience, the same thing would happen as happened in the time of Christ: The

'Samaritan Woman,' the 'Zacchaeus' would be converted into dynamic apostles of the Lord.

h) A sustained effort to find a concrete technique which, imitating the apostolic method, would take into consideration the personal problems and the concrete demands of each individual and offer a basic solution springing from Christ and his grace, and open persons to accept these as the force that can influence their whole lives.

i) The conviction that the solution must be simple, and because simple, universal; therefore, the three-day Cursillo must provide an experience of living the catholicity of the Faith, offering the same solution in shared environment, although adaptable to different situations, different social classes and cultures.<sup>5</sup>

A further perspective is gained from the section on what is fundamental to being a Christian.

By means of faith, of hope, of love, as infused gifts of the Holy Spirit the Christian lives and experiences God as Beginning, Goal and End . . . To be Christian is to live a divine life; it is to possess grace in our soul, and to enjoy familiarity with God. And this truly is an absolute novelty. Through grace (and this is what the Cursillos set out to achieve) life acquires new depth. The attitude which flows from it and matures from it gives meaning to the phrase 'to be Christian.' The first and foremost need of the faithful, as an essential part of the Mystical Body, is to feel themselves open to the indwelling of the divine persons in the soul of each one . . . From the very first year, it was maintained that the three-day Cursillos were not an attempt at a catechetical explanation, but at something prior to that, the proclamation of the message that saves, of a new life that transforms and shapes . . . It is a question of a personal encounter with the living God, in which faith is the love response to a personal summons which binds, and prayer is personal dialogue with a friend.

A Cursillo is essentially making Christianity come alive, providing the occasion for a personal experience of the grandeur of life in grace lived to its fullest. . . [This] becomes concrete in Cursillos from four standpoints:

- a) encounter with God (which entails self encounter),
- b) friendship with Christ,
- c) community of brothers,
- d) apostolic responsibility for the entire world.<sup>6</sup>

Although few who have participated in the *Cursillo/Emmaus* movement could articulate its underlying intent this clearly, the weekend is designed for, and amazingly effective at, enabling participating pilgrims to experience a new "liveliness" of grace, a new community of love, and a new commitment to the apostolic vision. This focus is maintained in the *Emmaus* form of *Cursillo* which is described as a "spiritual renewal movement that has been called to a unique task within the church." The objective is to inspire, challenge, and equip local church members for Christian apostolic action in their homes, churches, places of work, and in their communities. The official guide book for those who have finished their weekend reminds the pilgrims of this objective again and again:

It is vital to remember that the whole reason for the Walk to Emmaus is to make you a more faithful disciple and active member in your church.<sup>8</sup> . . . The sole purpose of the Emmaus Movement is to strengthen disciples within the ministry of individual congregations. Emmaus is in partnership with the church to inspire its leaders to become more effective and intentional in their ministry.<sup>9</sup> . . . The overriding purpose of Emmaus is to Christianize environments such as home, business, friendships, and churches.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, there are two expectations of persons attending a *Walk to Emmaus*: 1) be willing to expand their own inner spiritual lives, and 2) be ready to become more active disciples of Christ in their churches and in the world.

Some research has been done to analyze the effectiveness of *Emmaus* in accomplishing these goals. Woody L. Davis, a United Methodist minister and Ph.D. candidate in communication at the University of Kentucky, used an *Emmaus* weekend to study religious risk and choice shift theory. Approximately one month after participating in the weekend and taking extensive notes, he interviewed four of the leaders, ten male participants, and four of their wives. Davis reports the changes most commonly described by the men themselves or by their wives about their husbands included:

1. A shift in priorities toward relationships
2. A readiness to accept new leadership responsibilities in church
3. An increased commitment to practicing daily spiritual disciplines
4. A significantly enhanced readiness to talk about their faith.<sup>11</sup>

These reported changes, although from a small sample, are similar to my own observations and certainly in line with the goals and design of the *Cursillo/Emmaus* movement.

## Cursillo/Emmaus Design

The heart of the *Cursillo/Emmaus* program is the 72 hour "weekend" which one can attend only once as a "pilgrim." Team members who help lead the event are selected from those who have already completed their "Walk." Men and women usually hold their weekends separate from one another and husbands and wives are asked to make a common commitment to attend. The three days, beginning on Thursday evening and continuing through Sunday afternoon, are quite structured and provide the pilgrims an opportunity to reflect on their faith in Christ while participating in an intentional Christian community through worship, prayer, witnessing, teaching and small group discussions.

The *Walk to Emmaus* experience is built around fifteen talks—five given by clergy, and ten given by lay people. The clergy talks focus on explaining the life of grace: prevenient grace, justifying grace, the means of grace (sacraments and other means), obstacles to grace, and sanctifying grace. The lay talks reflect on living the life of grace and are entitled: priority, priesthood of all believers, piety, grow through study, Christian action, discipleship, changing our world, the Body of Christ, perseverance, and fourth day (moving back into the world from which we came).

Probably nothing in this description sounds unusually powerful or unique, but the ingredients of the program are interwoven into an exceptional format which provides the Holy Spirit an opportunity to impact each individual in a personal and unique way, and at the same time create a serendipitous sense of kingdom community. Some of the ingredients which make the *Walk to Emmaus* so effective in bringing both personal renewal and producing a sense of corporate power for mission are the following.

### *Supportive prayer*

Frequently hundreds of persons from all across the country and several foreign nations invest hours of prayer both before and during the weekend. A full 72 hour prayer vigil is kept at the site of the event. Each talk and each portion of the weekend are preceded with prayer. The team has been preparing and praying for weeks. The entire *Walk* is virtually bathed in prayer.

### *Extensive preparation and expected spontaneity*

The team which consists of about 15 lay persons and 5 clergy meets together regularly for two or three months prior to the weekend to review and critique all of the talks, to pray for the pilgrims and one another, and to share communion rejoicing in the meaning of God's grace in Christ. During the weekend the actual schedule unfolds for the pilgrims without benefit of having it before them. They must learn to trust those who lead them and hopefully learn to trust the Spirit of God. Life becomes something breaking in, spontaneous, unknown. The actual design and

schedule is essentially the same for every weekend; but since the leaders and the pilgrims are different, their responses cannot be anticipated even by the team. The weekend is always a living between what is familiar and what is unknown, trusting God for grace, guidance and love.

### *An atmosphere of agape love*

Special expressions of caring and service are modeled by the leaders, and a cadre of unheralded servants from the larger *Emmaus* community attend to details (meals, special decorations and celebrations, errands, special individual needs) just to make everything "the best that it can be." Scores of little reminders of supportive and affirming love come from all over the country and from around the world as banners and letters arrive from other *Cursillo* and *Emmaus* communities and are shared with the team and the pilgrims. Letters arrive in Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, German, English, Korean, Japanese, and numerous other languages from persons who are known to some and persons unknown to all. The letters are prayerful, hopeful and full of encouragement for what God will do as these pilgrims walk with the risen Lord to "Emmaus" following the footsteps of their brothers and sisters who have gone before. For many this is a first time experience of the beauty of the ecumenical unity of the Body of Christ.

### *Sound teaching, simple worship, and Christian witness*

The fifteen lay and clergy talks reveal the heart and core of living a life surrendered to God in Christ, by grace, through faith. Each pilgrim belongs to a table of six to eight others including one or two members of the team. Before each talk is given the entire group prays a prayer to the Holy Spirit asking for truth and renewal to come to them and to move across the face of the earth. After each talk several minutes are spent reviewing the basic message and sharing particular insights and feelings. Songs, laughter, worship, prayer, meals, biblical teaching, bold witnessing, and caring for one another blend the body together into a fellowship where Christ is sensed as present and truly honored.

### *A catholic spirit of cooperation*

Although the *Cursillo* movement is normally restricted to single denominations, the *Walk to Emmaus* is intentionally ecumenical, and involves both laity and clergy working together as Christ's disciples without regard for either status or denominational distinctions. *Emmaus* is also intentionally interracial, and provides for some the first experience of sharing life, faith, and deep friendship with Christian brothers and sisters who have previously been thought of as "other."

### *Christian community experienced*

Although there are opportunities for quiet personal reflection and meditation as well as counseling for any who choose, the dominant experience is one of being bound together in the Spirit of Christ. The small table groups help persons who have never known each other before become intimate Christian friends as they spend the 72 hours together exploring the meaning of their faith and calling. Seldom does a "retreat" or "revival" context have such sustained and intentional *koinonia* built into it. In such Christian fellowship there is power for significant and enduring change. Prayers are offered that the power will indeed be that of the Holy Spirit and that the change will be simply "conversion." The pilgrims begin to taste what is possible for the church, and they begin to long for a more personal and powerful life in God's grace. As this change is taking place, so is another. The pilgrims begin to sense more keenly than ever before the meaning of God's kingdom in the world, and they long to be more involved in helping it come to pass.

### *Follow-up groups for support and accountability*

As the *Emmaus* weekend draws to a close, the focus is on returning to "normal" life, but as different people—people ready to impact their environments as Christ's disciples. The pilgrims are reminded of the importance of belonging to an ongoing small group like the one they have participated in throughout the *Walk*. In a closing worship experience the larger *Emmaus* community gathers with the new pilgrims and they realize again they are part of something much larger than just an isolated three day retreat. Immediately following the *Walk*, the person who sponsored each pilgrim invites him or her to attend a "reunion group." These small groups, much like John Wesley's classes and bands, meet weekly for about an hour to support, encourage, and hold each other accountable for continued growth in grace and for faithfulness in witness and service. Each week they begin with the short "Prayer to the Holy Spirit" used regularly during the weekend, and after all have shared and prayed for special concerns, a closing prayer of thanksgiving concludes the hour of grace. Monthly the entire *Emmaus* community has a "Gathering" to rejoice together, challenge one another and share the Lord's supper. A local *Emmaus* Board of Directors gives guidance to the movement in each area and trains new team members for additional *Walks*.

### *Some Concerns Occasionally Expressed*

The *Walk to Emmaus* and *Cursillo* are not for everyone. They are in fact designed for persons who are already involved actively in their churches and in their community. The focus is on personal spiritual renewal and empowering leadership for the apostolic task. Persons are not therefore automatically accepted as candidates for the weekend just

because they are interested. In the first place they must be "sponsored" by someone who has already attended and is willing to be involved both before and after the weekend in preparing and debriefing the candidate. Secondly, the group makeup is important and too many from one church or one denomination can "overload" the balance sought. Likewise, persons who are undergoing significant personal stress are not considered good candidates. All of this concern for proper selection sometimes is seen as "elitist" or worse yet as "mysterious and secretive." Also the ongoing reunion groups and gatherings (which are open to any who wish to attend) are sometimes seen by those outside the movement as competitive to local churches or even "clubbish" or "cultic." To the extent that any movement suffers from such accusations and dangers, so does *Emmaus/Cursillo*. However, special attention is given today to avoid as much of this criticism as possible by being more open about the movement and more intentional about building bridges of understanding.

Some have seen the weekend as manipulative and dangerously emotional. They find it extremely uncomfortable to be "directed" for 72 hours of their lives by a lay director and team who may have been unknown prior to the beginning of the weekend. And since many do have a deeply moving experience of being loved, forgiven and empowered by God's grace, those uncomfortable with their own or others' emotions might have a difficult time. In reality, however, great care is taken to guard the dignity and freedom of each person. Yet, because of the focus on community, all that is done during the weekend requires a "going together," and those who find this "unnatural" will probably feel restricted and uncomfortable. Some of this feeling is natural to all who participate, especially during the first several hours of the weekend when most are still strangers to one another (as Jesus was to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus). Anyone who desires to go home is freely allowed to do so, and some have; but persons are encouraged to endure the difficult early stages of discomfort for the benefit that many have found as they stayed on the road walking with the "stranger" until their eyes were opened in the breaking of the bread and they knew the Lord (Luke 24).

Another concern expressed by some is that Emmaus threatens the local church by taking leaders out of the church or by making those who have not attended feel as though they have "missed something." Surely there is always the risk that some recently transformed "converts" will be overly zealous in witnessing to the benefits of the *Emmaus* weekend. But in reality, there are those working faithfully in the church who could use the renewal experience and fresh vision of the kingdom of God which *Emmaus* provides. When they are thus renewed, they may indeed become enthusiastic, perhaps even "fired up." But *Emmaus* is more than just "fire"—it is fire with a clarified vision, and what church doesn't want more of their leaders so empowered? Since it is not merely a lay movement but one that seriously tries to involve the pastors of the churches and gain the support of the judicatory leaders as well, it is hoped that any confusion, fear, or sense of "competition" can be reduced or

even removed entirely. It is the clear intent of the movement to serve the church, not to compete with the church.

## Conclusion

Many denominational leaders were not pleased with the *TIME* magazine article cited earlier. Some, quite naturally, were defensive, and reminded the press and their constituents of the many things they were doing right. No doubt many things are being done right, but obviously—at least in most mainline Protestant churches—an apostolic sense of mission and evangelism does not seem to be one of them. Church members and clergy as well are in need of renewed motivation and power for bearing witness to the salvation of God offered through Jesus Christ for the whole earth. Such renewal *never* comes without making at least some (if not all) uncomfortable. But then the gospel of the kingdom is not primarily about comfort. It is however, about change, and change is rarely sought by those who see no need for it. But for those who are discouraged and who long to walk again with the Master, the journey to Emmaus is still one way for dejected disciples and weary congregations to become enthusiastic witnesses of the living Christ. He still manages to come along side, to open the scriptures, to renew the hearts and minds of those he loves, to break the bread, to reveal his risen presence, to build his church, and through his church, to reach his world. This renewal is the promise of God for every generation. *Cursillo/Emmaus* is only one way to this renewal for our day, but it is one very promising way.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Richard N. Ostling, "Those Mainline Blues," *TIME*, May 22, 1989, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>"I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case, unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out." John Wesley, "Thoughts Upon Methodism," *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. XIII (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 1978, reprinted from the 1872 edition by The Wesleyan Methodist Bookroom, London), p. 258.

<sup>4</sup>*The Fundamental Ideas Of The Cursillo* (Dallas: National Ultreya Publications, 1974) p. 19.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 43-35.

<sup>7</sup>Robert Wood and Marie Livingston Roy, *Day Four: The Pilgrim's Continued Journey* (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1986) p. 12.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>11</sup>Woody L. Davis, Research paper entitled "Religious Risk: A Qualitative Field Study of Choice Shift," December, 14, 1987.

# TRUTH, METHOD AND EVANGELISM

Thomas H. McAlpine

## Introduction

Last fall our president, Raymond Bakke, invited me to contribute to this meeting by coordinating an exhibit of evangelism resources and presenting a paper reflecting on these resources. It is an honor to contribute to the Academy in this way. My thanks to the publishers, denominational evangelism offices, and other groups who sent materials.

You should know two things about the paper. I worked with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at U.C. Berkeley 1969-72. Integrity (the fit between the message and the messenger and the messenger's community) and relevance (identifying a significant point of contact between the Gospel and the actual situation of the human community) were key issues in that context. As will be evident, the InterVarsity experiences remains my primary filter in thinking about evangelism. Add to that ministry within Baptist, Episcopal, Evangelical Covenant, and Presbyterian contexts, and you get a perspective which I like to think of as eclectic, but which you may regard as simply muddled.

As to genre, this paper offers a collection of observations on current methods of evangelism as they related to some dimensions of the evangelistic task. Do these observations link in any way? I wonder if the importance of small groups is not one such link. Perhaps you will agree, or see other links.

## General Comments on Method

We understand the limitation of methods. While I shall review some of these, I don't think I need to convince anyone. On the other hand, our various constituencies ask for methods, even of the turnkey variety.

First, the relationship between the work of God the evangelist and our work is always subject to God's decision, despite the increasing sophistica-

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tion in our use of the tools of social science (e.g., audience analysis). Scripture takes up this issue of divine-human cooperation with regard to the tools of Iron Age military science:

The horse is made ready for the day of battle,  
but the victory belongs to the Lord. (Prov 21:31)

More fundamentally, it is always an open question as to what relationship our activities have either to church or kingdom.

Second, methods can't be used to finesse weaknesses elsewhere. Put positively, I think evangelism is a natural side-effect or outgrowth of a healthy Christian community. (Here we are indebted to writers such as Roland Allen or Michael Green.) And this means that when we are concerned about evangelism not happening, methods of evangelism may not be the place to begin the conversation.

This was nicely illustrated by Tom Gillespie's story in our '85 meeting at Princeton.<sup>1</sup> As he sought to encourage evangelism in his Menlo Park congregation, he discovered that many had difficulty articulating their faith even to themselves. So he started there, and knew he was making progress when months later, in the narthex after the service, someone talked exuberantly of sharing Jesus at the cocktail party the night before.

So, third, evangelism probably happens more outside than inside of planned events or programs. As an extreme example, Chuck Fager suggests that the "unprogrammed" Friends are gaining members while the "evangelical" Friends are losing members, even though evangelism is a more explicit focus among the latter. An unnamed evangelical judicatory spent a million dollars on evangelism in the past five years and grew by 2%; the Baltimore district of unprogrammed Friends showed an 11% increase while spending a maximum of \$200 a year—though here, as with most other similar anecdotes, the multiple variables are not obviously under control.<sup>2</sup>

In 1985, World Vision's Field Development Division produced the study "Development and Evangelism: A Study of World Vision Development Projects." Hear especially the comment under "Areas for further study:"

One is struck by the apparent inconsistency between the most frequently used evangelism methods as determined by answers to the statistical part of the study and the most effective evangelism approaches as deduced from the case histories. Crusades, campaigns, and evangelism conferences are favored in the former and personal, one-to-one or small group evangelism are favored in the latter. The mass evangelism approaches are less time consuming and are usually among the 'standard' methods known, while being less contextual. The personal, one-to-one approaches are far more time and staff intensive, yet often more contextual and hence fruitful. This area requires more study and may in fact point to the need for increased training for WV and partner agency staff.<sup>3</sup>

Why is this so? The answer is clear within the World Vision framework, and I think the answer holds in other contexts. In our work we're always bearing witness to some value or allegiance, whether Western civilization, technology, God, the value of those we work with, or some combination of these. It is not that we need to become evangelists. We already are and need clarity on what we're evangelizing for! And I mention World Vision simply because it is my context, not as a claim that we are doing either better or worse than other groups addressing this issue.

Finally, fourth, a method is often an apotheosis of something which worked well somewhere sometime somehow. The most useful—and necessary—use of any method will probably be to deapoteosize it and treat it as a model: something which worked well in another context and may be relevant to our situation as we (1) draw selected elements from it or (2) draw inspiration from it in developing our own response.

These considerations—God's freedom with respect to our methods, the necessarily subordinate role specific methods will play in our overall pattern of communication, the spontaneity of evangelism, the locus-bound character of methods—provide a context in which we can think about methods.

So why talk about methods at all? For the simple reason that it is inevitable that we will use methods, in the broader sense of customary or patterned behavior.

### Methods: An Overview

For purposes of overview, I have divided methods along the following lines:

Category	Subcategories	Examples
Personal	one to one	visitation
	structured	
	unstructured	
Mediated	group to group	evangelistic Bible study
	one/group to congregation	evangelistic sermon crusade
	one/group to many	
Contextual	literature	
	a/v marketing to home	direct mail, telemarketing, relief, development, social action, education, etc.

How does this overview relate to the display?

There is a great deal of material on personal evangelism and visitation, contextualized for different denominational and theological traditions. As

an educational exercise, perhaps the Southern Baptists could use the Episcopal material, the Catholics the Free Methodist material, etc. So there are resources for mutual enrichment.

There is one place the material needs to give us more help, and that is the integration of vocation and witness. Each of us is following a particular calling which brings us into association with various groups of people, and each of us is a witness to these various groups. Is this a matter of wearing two hats, or can we find a way of naming and strengthening the "I" that partakes in these and other "roles"? InterVarsity Video's Marketplace series deals with both vocation and witness, but even here, the discussions applying one's Christian faith to one's work and witnessing to one's coworkers tend to run on parallel, rather than intersecting, tracks.

I did not see much material on the small group as a locus for evangelism. Much is available on the small group *per se*. And for university settings InterVarsity has a good number of guides for evangelistic Bible studies. But I am thinking here not simply of the small group as agent of intentional evangelism, but of the small group as a place where non-Christians can watch the faith being sorted through and lived out.<sup>4</sup>

A problem with this way of laying out methods is that it has no natural place for programs which perhaps encompass both renewal and evangelism. Here I'm thinking of the rediscovery of adult catechesis, about which I'll say more later. Again, the Covenant Discipleship groups David Watson has been encouraging within the Methodist context are relevant.<sup>5</sup>

There is little material here on events such as evangelistic crusades. Sources for such material would be on the one hand, the offices of evangelists, and on the other, articles and monographs such as the study by Pointer.<sup>6</sup> There seems to be a consensus that these events have little impact on people who are not already in meaningful contact with the church, but they do provide occasion for discipling within the church and for further contact with non-Christians.

The "mediated" category is rather underrepresented. The InterVarsity videos provide, I think, a nice example of ways videos can be used in a single-screen format. For marketing to homes, a number of the denominational offices have useful material, including the Paulists and the Wisconsin Evangelism Lutheran Synod.

Where we need more help, I think, is in figuring out how to use nonevangelistic items evangelistically. On the one hand there are novelists such as O'Conner or Percy. What use might be made of those? On the other hand, movies such as *The Last Temptation*. Rather than picket it, why not pass out flyers inviting people coming out of the theater to attend a set of 4 Bible studies ("If you liked the movie, the book isn't bad, either!"). How do we teach pastors to be opportunistic?

Regarding the contextual category, we do things besides evangelism. How to think about the interrelationship between evangelism and these other activities often appears problematic, particularly when positions are polarized. Neither isolation nor tack-ons are really appropriate, although both are regularly practiced. Here I am in a more general way returning

to the concern expressed earlier about the integration of vocation and witness. Any real integration, as the World Vision report indicates, is time-consuming, and will only happen if that is acknowledged and accepted, particularly in a management-by-objective environment.

Education as a partner to evangelism is frequently used in mission situations. How might it be used here? Different sorts of evidence—the popularity of Gothard's "Basic Youth Conflicts" seminars, the increasing fragility of the family, the reported rates of individual, not to mention national, indebtedness—suggest that the church in this country might well worry more about how the agenda of, say, the book of Proverbs is to be contextualized and communicated here.

How do we evaluate all this material? As a general question, we might ask, "How does it square with our best thinking?" There are other equally important questions which could be asked, as, for example, to what degree do these methods do what they claim, and with what side-effects? Some of these questions will be noted; but the basic question will be the fit between theory and these practices. The areas, I shall discuss are: agents; audience; model of conversion assumed; and context.

## Evangelizing the Evangelizers

Part of my work with InterVarsity involved traveling with two large evangelistic multi-media events, "Twentyonehundred" and "Habakkuk." When we brought these to college campuses, the first task was usually helping the Christians cope: with the former, because it put the Beatles, Vanilla Fudge, *et al* on the same soundtrack with Christian performers; with the latter, because it suggested that the woes Habakkuk pronounced on those amassing wealth, relying on military prowess, etc, might relate to post-WW II US history.

Newbigin, in fact, defined this as the difference between evangelism and proselytism:

In proselytism I open the door to bring another into my enclosure. In true evangelism we give room for the Holy Spirit, recognizing that it is the Spirit alone who converts, to use both us and those to whom we bear witness to bring about something new, something by which both parties are changed, and something comes into being that is a little more adequate as a sign and foretaste of Christ's universal reign. The acid test is always this: Is the evangelist ready to be changed by the encounter, or does he or she look for change only in the other party?"

Translating this observation into the arena of methods, might one say that good methods will tend to be those which change the evangelizer or at least open the evangelizer to change?

The strength of some of the material here is that it starts with explicit self-reflection on the part of the evangelizers. Armstrong's P.R.O.O.F. model is a nice example.<sup>8</sup>

## Audience

There is, of course, good apostolic precedent for attending to the audience (1 Cor 9:19f). What are the significant segments of our audience, and how is this reflected in our resources? I assume that the answers which can be given to these questions are "a posteriori," viz, answers we discover as we discover what is blocking the spread of the gospel or what needs to be involved in a contextualizing of it. Therefore this discussion pursues a number of tracks without attempting to first establish a theoretical framework.

## Ethnicity

In his keynote address to the National Convocation on Evangelizing Ethnic America, held in Houston in May 1985, C. Peter Wagner broke down the US population as follows:

Europeans	94 m	41 %
Anglos	67 m	29 %
Blacks	26.5m	11 %
Hispanics	23 m	10 %
Deaf	14 m	6 %
Asians	3.5m	1.5%
American Indians	3.5m	1.5%
	231.5m	100 %

Wagner explained some of the less obvious groupings:

"The Europeans include those who have a self-identity as a German or Irish or Italian or Polish or Norwegian or Dutch or Greek or some other . . . Notice that the deaf are listed separately. Although they are not an ethnic group as such, they do need a specialized kind of evangelism since they have their own language, a highly endogamous marriage pattern, and behavior patterns distinct from the dominant culture."<sup>9</sup>

It is therefore encouraging to see material in Spanish coming out of some of the denominational offices (Paulist, UCC). In 1982 Robert L. Burt reported "Twenty-seven of the last fifty-two new [UCC] ministries have been among Hispanic, Black, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, and Native American peoples." What I would like ask is to what degree material is simply being translated, and to what degree it is being contextualized.

At the same time, the displayed resources are perhaps as reflective of financial resources as of anything else. The National Baptist Convention

of America and the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., are two of the thirty largest denominations in this country; both appear to have evangelism desks run by a pastor with no staff and minimal budget.

### People Groups

In addition to these broad groupings, it is possible to think of our nation as composed of multiple-interlocking sets of groups, defined by age, employment, income bracket, sex, etc. MARC, of course, has been one of the protagonists for this approach.

Not incidentally, the very diversity of materials displayed here is in itself a good clue to the cultural diversity we face. I am reminded of the seaside cliffs exhibit at Victoria's Natural History Museum: altitude, wind exposure, sun exposure, surface. As these vary, so vary the many species of birds—and the cliff is fully populated. So the diversity is something to celebrate—and the exhibit here represents only part of that diversity.

The reason it is imperative to develop awareness of this dimension is that any of these factors can serve to block transmission of the faith. Language is the most obvious barrier, but other factors can block equally effectively. And developing awareness is simply a matter of courtesy—the host's or hostess's concern that none be left out or not get to the table.

On the other hand, an exclusive focus on people groups can obscure more basic questions. First, doesn't really good news jump barriers as those "outside" decide they want to get in on what's happening "inside" and break the barriers themselves? People buy and learn to use personal computers despite incomprehensible manuals or poor dealer support. If this is not going on, what does this say about just how good our "good news" is?

Second, people groups may not be as isolated from each other as it is sometimes convenient to think. The many groups of poor people are an obvious example. On the one hand, the good news needs to be brought in ways appropriate to their particular circumstances. On the other hand, it is not as though they are not already in contact with Christians. The problem is that the contact with Christians they do have does not necessarily motivate them to find out about their Christ.

### Engel Scale

Research inspired by marketing studies has suggested further ways of thinking about our audience. Jim Engel has developed a number of scales for thinking about our audiences (e.g. fig. 1).<sup>10</sup>

This is obviously not fully satisfactory, for it leaves out the behavioral dimension. Nevertheless, it gives us ways of recognizing the variety of places our audience may be in, and the resulting adjustments that may be needed in our communication. This dimension is not in most of the available resources. On at least an elemental level, it should be. As a broad generalization, these perspectives suggest that methods or tools focused on a single decision (e.g., the Four Spiritual Laws of *Campus Crusade*)

need to be used with real discrimination, and that from what we know it is probably unwise to use them as the primary tool or orientation.

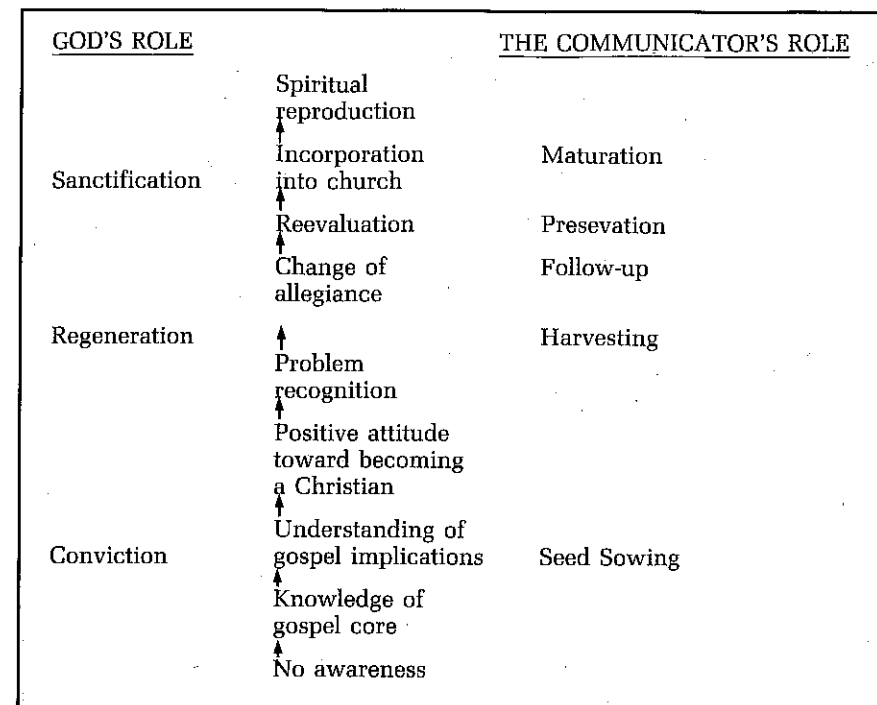


Figure 1

At the same time, such marketing-based distinctions only give us part of the picture. Two more theologically-oriented attempts to get at the question of the audience's position are provided by Robert Kolb and Alfred C. Krass. Kolb, working out of the Lutheran law-gospel tradition, suggests the following:

Christian conversation can begin only when the Christian knows *why* the other person is asking about life. Human creatures formulate their questions about life from one or the other of two stances: from *a stance of security*, based on a sufficiently firm trust in someone or something to enable them to get along without recourse to trust in their Creator; or from *a stance of brokenness*, perhaps even despair, in which the old bases for decision-making have been so challenged and shaken that they are no longer viable. In this case life must find a new basis, or cease.<sup>11</sup>

And law and gospel are, respectively, the appropriate responses.

On the Reformed side, consider Puritan evangelism, which stressed preaching that would lead to conviction of (specific) sin. Conviction would

lead to contrition, and the person would make real—if ineffectual—attempts to break from sin. Only then could one understand and appreciate Christ. The Puritans knew that these stages could be short-circuited, but warned against it, for short-circuiting these steps produces false hope and false peace.<sup>12</sup>

### Fowler

The work of James Fowler and others on stages of faith development is finding its way into evangelism methods, albeit in preliminary ways.<sup>13</sup> My impression is that if we buy into something like Fowler, two major questions remain to be settled: (1) in what sense do we regard the latter stages as better, and (2) are we really willing to adjust our evangelism to fit the presumptive stage(s) of our audience(s)? More experience is needed here.

### Gallup

*The Unchurched American*, the 1988 Gallup Research Study, is an appropriate place to begin.<sup>14</sup> The study uses a modest definition of "churched" as one who is a member of a church or synagogue and who has attended in past 6 months, excluding special events. By this criterion, 56% of American adults are churched.

"In the decade since 1978, the churches of America have made no headway in narrowing the gap between religious belief and church involvement—between 'believer' and 'belongs'." In a provocative way, this summary highlights the commonalities between churched and unchurched with respect to belief. The news release speaks of "a significant degree of traditional religious belief among the unchurched, with only 18% claiming no religious affiliation, [and] two-thirds (63) believing the Bible to be either the literal or inspired work of God." Other responses point in the same direction, the percentages listed for churched and unchurched responses respectively:

93%/72% believe Jesus Christ was God or Son of God  
67%/41% pray at least once a day

What does this suggest about the evangelistic task? On the one hand, in many cases the cutting edge is probably not going to be belief—certainly in the abstract sense of belief. On the other hand, we probably need increased emphasis on evangelism which sees as its goal incorporation of the individual or family into a local church.

I would like to raise these issues in a different way by attending to other items in the Gallup report:

75%/86% "An individual should arrive at his or her own religious beliefs independent of any churches or synagogues"

58%/35% "Most churches and synagogues today have a clear sense of the real spiritual nature of religion"  
75%/57% "Most churches and synagogues today are effective in helping people find meaning in life"

Here it seems to me the issue of contact and means of evangelism are inextricably intertwined. Both the responses and the wording of the questions suggests to me that we are in deep trouble. For if we identify the role of the church or synagogue as "helping people find meaning in life" or suggest that religion is "spiritual" or that what churches and synagogues are about is "religion", then it should not surprise us that 75%/86% of American adults believe that "an individual should arrive at his or her own religious beliefs independent of any churches or synagogues." Within our culture's paradigm which splits public and private, worldly and spiritual, and assigns Christianity to the latter, it is hard to imagine a different outcome. So our evangelism has to address, at least implicitly, the paradigm.

The church is about the question of whether it is possible to have human life in the late 20th century, and the church's confession is that God in Christ is creating and enlarging a sphere in which that is possible. Obviously, we need to be able to do more than say that; we need to be able to point to places (preferably in our own zip code) where it is happening. Hence my interest in small groups.

### Models of conversion

The resources tend to break along the question of whether evangelism is equated with situations calling for a "decision for Christ" or understood to be a process. There is significant overlap between this question and the earlier discussion of audience analysis.

On the process side, the rediscovery of adult catechesis among the Catholics, which is now being picked up also by the Episcopalians, looks extremely encouraging. An accessible starting point here for evangelicals is Robert Webber's *Celebrating Our Faith*.<sup>15</sup>

A second question, which is not the same question: What is the appropriate context, either in terms of knowledge or in terms of personal relationships, for seeking conversion? What evidence we have would suggest that inadequate context can be counter-productive. As Arn interprets a study by Yeakley, there are significant differences in effect depending on whether evangelism is viewed as confrontational or relational:

It was found that 70 percent (169 of 240) of those persons who are now active church members came to their new faith and church through a member who saw the persuasion as "relational." By contrast, 87 percent of those persons (209 to 240) who made a verbal commitment but soon became inactive came to that decision through a member whose view of evangelism was characterized as "confrontational." And of

those who said "no thanks," 75 percent (180) did so in response to a church member who saw evangelism as simply sharing certain content, facts, and theology. Interestingly, this study indicates that 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!<sup>16</sup>

Here too our practice in evangelism will reflect our practice within the church. For we are faced with the task of receiving the tradition in a way which does justice both to it and to our context, and our failings within the church will carry over when we move outside.

Does this mean discounting all the material which encourages new contacts? Hardly. It does mean that we recognize and celebrate the maturity evidenced in much of this material which sees the new contracts as beginnings of relationships within which, at appropriate times, decisions will be solicited, rather than as one-shot events.

This attention to effects is, by the way, one of the major strengths of a church-growth perspective. It forces attention not only on the rate at which people are entering the church, but also the rate at which they are leaving the church—and what sorts of connections there might be between the rates!

## Evangelism and Everything else

The evangelism/social concern debate has reached an unsteady consensus along the separate but equal lines which has done nothing to help us think more intelligently about either. Bosch has, I think, pointed us in the direction the discussion needs to go by a series of diagrams representing the "ultra-evangelical," "ecumenical," and unlabeled options (see fig. 2).<sup>17</sup>

But for the most part this remains on the theoretical level. Most denominational headquarters still have separate desks for evangelism and justice concerns. How should we think about this?

It is here, I think, that the twin desiderata of community as evangelist and a significant time period for the inquirer to learn what he/she is getting into become apparent. Equally apparent: the community can evangelize no better than it is living, although its tradition provides a resource for internal critique.

In the Church of the Savior in Washington DC, membership involves participation in a particular ministry. In that sort of context inquirers will have an opportunity to see what language about "salvation" and "lordship" mean.

In Melbourne, the Rev. Allan Marr accepted a call to move from a strong church on Melbourne's wealthy east side to a dying church on Melbourne's depressed west side. Twelve families went with him. They

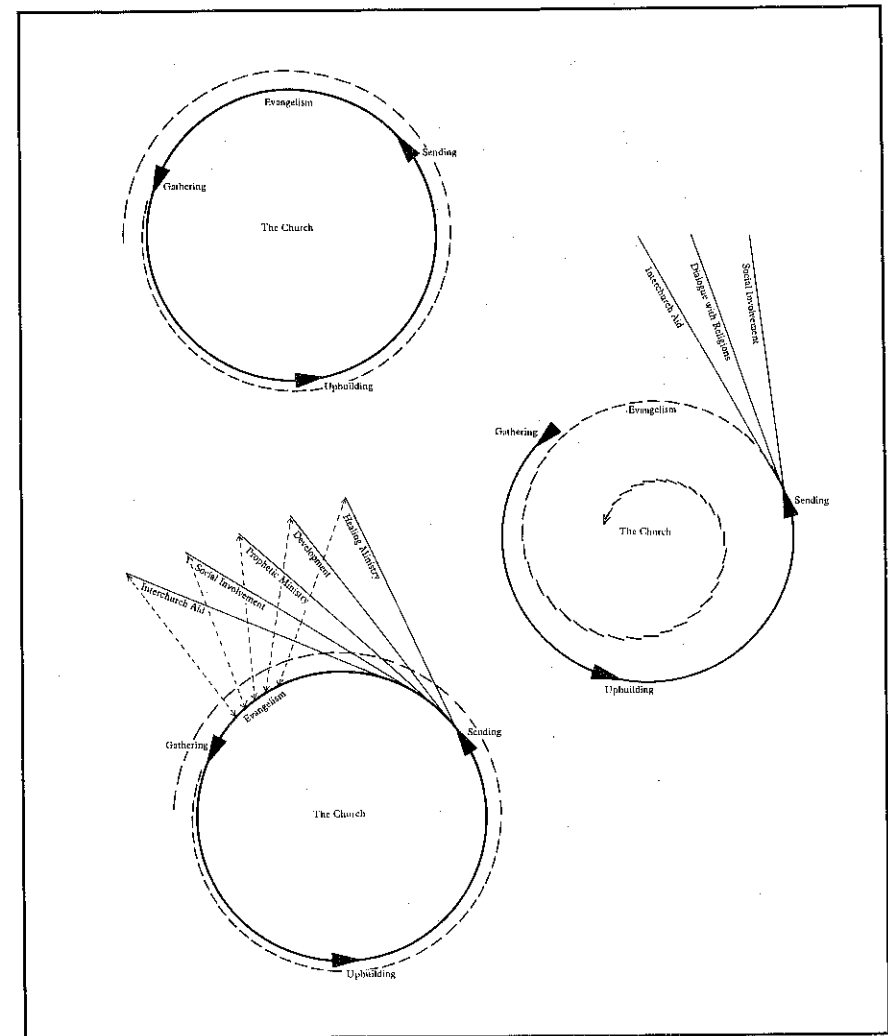


Figure 2

bought homes in the neighborhood and invested themselves in the neighborhoods. The community understands something of what Jesus' incarnation means; the church now has about 150 members. And the marvelous part about that story is that no one thinks they did anything extraordinary.

Stories like these keep us going—and keep our reflections rooted. Whether discussing "evangelism and everything else" or previous topics, we need more of them. Perhaps the Academy can contribute to their identification and collection.

## ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING MATERIALS

American Baptist Churches in the USA  
Assemblies of God  
Campus Crusade for Christ, International  
Church of God (Anderson, IN)  
Church of God (Cleveland, TN)  
Church of the Nazarene  
Churches Alive  
The Episcopal Church  
Evangelical Covenant Church of America  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Free Methodist Church of North America  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North & South America  
National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc  
Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Roman Catholic Church (Paulists)  
Southern Baptist Convention  
United Church of Christ  
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

## PUBLISHERS PROVIDING MATERIALS

Attic	Augsburg	Broadman
Greenlawn	Harper & Row	Herald
InterVarsity	InterVarsity Video	Judson
Knox	Moody	Multnomah
Orbis	Paragon	Paulist
Presbyterian & Reformed	Revell	Westminster

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See *Journal of the Academy for Evangelism*, Volume One (1985-86): 96.

<sup>2</sup>Cited in C. Wayne Zunkel, *Church Growth Under Fire* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987), p. 184.

<sup>3</sup>"Development and Evangelism: A Study of World Vision Development Projects." Unpublished manuscript of World Vision International Field Development Division, 1985.

<sup>4</sup>See Paul Hiebert's comments on the importance of neutral territory in "Window Shopping the Gospel," *Urban Mission* 4.5:5-12.

<sup>5</sup>See David Lowes Watson, *Accountable Discipleship* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1984).

<sup>6</sup>Roy Pointer, *Crusade Evangelism: The Fruit That Remained*. MARC Monograph 12 (Bromley: MARC Europe, n.d.).

<sup>7</sup>Lesslie Newbigin, *Mission in Christ's Way*. WCC Mission Series 8 (Geneva: WCC, 1987), p.35.

<sup>8</sup>"Probing Responsibly Our Own Faith." See Richard Stoll Armstrong, *Service Evangelism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979).

<sup>9</sup>C. Peter Wagner, "A Vision for Evangelizing the Real America," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 10.2 (April 1986): 60-61. The isolation of the deaf as a separated grouping is probably also related to the ministry strategy of one of the major sponsors of Houston

<sup>10</sup>85. Descriptions of ministries to these and other large groupings as well as listings of groups in such ministry may be found in Earl Parrin, *Missions U.S.A.* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985).

<sup>10</sup>Reproduced in Viggo B. Sogaard, "Applying Christian Communication." Ph.D. Dissertation, School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1986.

<sup>11</sup>Robert Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today: A Theology for Evangelism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), p. 10.

<sup>12</sup>I owe this description to Alfred C. Krass, who is interested in broadening the range of sins evangelists should be discussing! See his "Deciding for Christ: Why the "quick sale" isn't really evangelism," *The Other Side* 91 (April 1979): 54-56.

<sup>13</sup>See for example John Walsh, *Evangelization and Justice: New Insights for Christian Ministry* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982). See also Ann Elizabeth Proctor McElligott, "Faith Development and Evangelism: Selected readings to accompany a study of stages of faith as a tool for congregational planning in evangelism." Leader's Guide and Participants Handbook (Mimeograph manuscript, 1986).

<sup>14</sup>*The Unchurched American* (The Princeton Religion Research Center, 1988).

<sup>15</sup>Robert Webber, *Celebrating Our Faith: Evangelism Through Worship* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

<sup>16</sup>W. Charles Arn, "Evangelism or Disciple Making?" in *Church Growth: State of the Art*, edited by C. Peter Wagner, with Win Arn and Elmer Towns (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1986), p. 64.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### Evangelism in the Twenty-First Century: The Critical Issues.

*Edited by Thom S. Rainer. Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1989. Pp. xii + 227. Paperback \$12.95.*

This book is a tribute to Lewis A. Drummond, long time professor of evangelism at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, past president of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education, and now president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. It consists of twenty-one essays written by his friends, colleagues, or former students, touching on the major issues facing those who seek to do evangelism in the contemporary setting.

The volume is a worthy tribute to a man who has distinguished himself over a lifetime of service in the field of evangelism. Lewis Drummond has not only contributed to our understanding of evangelism through his many books and articles, and taught whole generations of men and women who went on to become evangelists, pastor-evangelists and professors of evangelism. Most importantly, throughout his whole life he has been an evangelist. He certainly deserves the honor of such a book; and the love, respect, and admiration the authors have for him is evident in its pages.

The contributors include those who are famous in the field of evangelism (e.g., Billy Graham and Bill Bright), those who teach evangelism (Robert Coleman, C. Peter Wagner) and many who are pastor-evangelists. As one might expect, given the variety of authors, the essays differ in tone and audience. Some enter into the ongoing dialogue in the field (e.g. "Evangelism in Theological Education" by Robert E. Coleman); others assume no knowledge of the subject and are useful for beginning students (e.g. "Evangelism and Apologetics" by L. Joseph Rosas III); still others present original research (e.g. "Evangelism and the Call of Christ" by James G. Merritt). This diversity is reflected in the following discussion of selected essays.

Timothy George's essay, "The Challenge of Evangelism in the History of the Church," is a well-written, terse account of twenty centuries of evangelism which would be most useful in the class room setting as an overview of this subject. C. Peter Wagner wrestles with the connection between church growth and evangelism though (as one would expect) he focuses more on current thinking in the field of church growth than in the field of evangelism. Paige Patterson has written an interesting essay entitled "Lifestyle Evangelism" in which he contributes to the debate between those who advocate lifestyle evangelism and those who advocate confrontational/intrusional evangelism. He argues that both styles of outreach are necessary and he formulates a set of guidelines that reduce the liabilities in each approach. Delos Miles updates the debate between social work and evangelism, contending that they should be partners in ministry, not antagonists, and offers suggestions as to how to cross "the great divide" that exists between the two.

Don Cox has written a useful reflection on the relationship between evangelism and the mass media. He summarizes the history of religious broadcasting and then asks the critical question: How many people are actually being reached via the mass media and in what ways? He argues that while it is difficult to count exactly how many Americans tune into the electronic church weekly, it is a substantial figure. He contends, however, that "by and large, the non-Christian society is not being reached through media evangelism . . . Religious broadcasting is primarily reaching insiders . . . The primary role of the mass media could be characterized as providing some Christian nurture to people who are already Christians" (p. 67).

This volume is a gold mine of information, especially for those who would like to know what issues are being addressed in the field of evangelism today and some of the answers that are being proposed. It would be a good resource to use in an adult Sunday School class or in an introductory college or seminary course on evangelism. The book, like Lewis Drummond himself, is characterized by a love for evangelism, scholarship when it comes to the issues, and zeal for the gospel.

Richard V. Peace

Richard V. Peace is Associate Professor of Evangelism and Media and Director of Media Education at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, So. Hamilton, Massachusetts and a past president of the Academy for Evangelism.

### Bringing Your Church Back to Life: Beyond Survival Mentality.

*By Daniel L. Buttry. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1988. Pp. 159. Paperback \$8.95.*

This is an important book if for no other reason than that it deals with a vital issue not often addressed, that of bringing renewal to congregations locked into "survival" mentality. Buttry believes that most white mainline congregations are in decline, and where decline sets in a survival mentality predominates. His thesis is that unless that disease is cured, death will come. Healing is possible, although not easy.

Buttry writes out of his own experience as pastor of an American Baptist church in Boston. He tells his story effectively, recognizing that one cannot duplicate the steps which lead to renewal, but that experiences and examples can make the renewal process understandable and believable. In any case, Buttry believes the key to renewal is not techniques but vision.

The book has three main topics: understanding the disease, examining the antidote (vision), and looking at barriers to renewal.

The first step in understanding the disease is to recognize the symptoms, which begin when survival becomes the goal (although the issue is likely to be stated indirectly, as for example, "We need to reach the youth"). Other symptoms are an orientation to the past, fear of change

and of risk-taking, control-oriented leaders, and money-dominated agendas. This is very useful material, and the author points out that treating the symptoms does not help.

The hope for the congregation is in a faithful remnant who can be challenged to see the vision, and who will pray and work to bring it to reality. In describing the emergence of this remnant the author discusses the probable loss of those members of the congregation whose primary purpose is fulfilled through the programs and relationships of the church, while suggesting those who stay and respond to the vision do so as a result of vital faith in God. That seems to be an understandable attempt to censure people who contributed to the author's pain and distress.

The section on vision, which is the longest part of the book, seems to me the weakest. There is good stuff here, but it is scattered throughout a section which has two shortcomings: much of the material seems rather obvious, and the section takes too long to get where we want (though perhaps that is a parabolic point).

In Buttry's experience, which is probably typical, one of the issues which needed to be faced was that of ethnic change in the community. I felt the author showed a particular sensitivity throughout the book to the implications of this change, and he states it very clearly:

Many survivalist churches are ethnically pure islands in changing neighborhoods, and there will be no renewal until the congregation is willing to welcome people who are different, not only to fill pews and give money but to shape worship, ministry, and make decisions that reflect the new culture as well as the old one (pp. 65, 66).

The pastor can expect to be the key vision-bearer, who will need to discharge four key tasks. The people must be loved with gentleness and patience; the vision needs to be articulated clearly and communicated regularly; the pastor must live out the vision as a sign and example and the changes which take place must be interpreted in light of the vision.

The third section deals with barriers to renewal which must be confronted. They include traditions (do they still have meaning?); structures (are they linked to the past?); and the building (is it to be protected or used?). Other barriers are attitudinal; they need to be recognized and dealt with patiently and persistently. Included are control, divisiveness, and racism.

The last section, particularly chapter ten, is solid and helpful. Buttry does not minimize the depth of the struggle involved in moving a church from survival to renewal, and emphasizes the vital importance of prayer. He does come, however, to point out that the issue is the result of a choice. Congregations often choose to hold on to the status quo, to live by worn-out traditions, to clutch fading power, to live in the past. The temptation is to put off painful decisions, but that is to choose death. Pastors face the temptation to "hold on" until they can escape into another parish and retirement. Holding on is also choosing death.

This is a hopeful book. "God is looking for those who will bear witness to the divine grace at work in the world, and a renewed church is a testimony that cannot be denied" (p 147). In so far as this book can help even one congregation to reach that goal, its purpose will have been fulfilled.

Robert L. Bast

Robert L. Bast is the Minister For Evangelism and Church Development of The Reformed Church in America.

### Connecting with the Spirit of Christ: Evangelism for a Secular Age.

*By Christopher C. Walker. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1988. Pp. vi + 117. Paperback \$8.95.*

This short book breaks new and interesting ground in the field of evangelism. Written by an Australian minister who completed his studies in North America, it represents a concerted effort to think through to a conception and theology of evangelism which would relate to the contemporary, secular world.

It is divided into three parts. The first deals with the content of evangelism. In this Walker develops a definition of evangelism which sees it primarily as proclamation, but not in narrow or reductionist fashion. Evangelism must be "holistic," informing and infusing all the church does. This fits nicely with Walker's fundamental theological categories. Here he picks up the themes of dialogue, prevenient grace, creation, redemption, conversion, and salvation. The key move made in this is to say that God works in and through creation, but that consciously relating to God through Christ brings a new presence of the Spirit, and the characteristic way to meet Christ is through proclamation. Such proclamation has an element of both judgment and grace, an echo but not a repetition of the traditional Protestant distinction between law and gospel. How this is applied is a confessional matter worked out on the hoof in the various contexts of evangelistic ministry.

The second part is devoted to the issue of how to communicate the gospel with secular people. This is where the commitment to prevenient grace becomes most conspicuous. Walker takes what he calls five points of engagement and ferrets out those places where God is already at work preparing the way for the gospel. The themes which emerge at this juncture are the desire for self-transcendence, the concern for meaning and direction in life, the desire for an enjoyable and challenging life, the desire for a full and mature life, and the concern for social justice. An especially interesting feature of the presentation is the attempt to illustrate how the gospel works by the narrating of the stories of heroes of the faith, like Augustine and Mother Teresa, and of ordinary Christians whom Walker has known in his church experience.

In the third section Walker examines four optional theologies of evangelism, taking John Baillie, Karl Barth, Rudolph Bultmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg as his paradigms. This paves the way for a final chapter which provides an outline of some enduring principles of responsible evangelism which could break the logjam of disputes between extreme conservatives and extreme liberals.

The great merit of this volume is the explicit attempt to relate evangelism on the one hand to a secular age and on the other to theological themes which have been the preoccupation of professional theologians. There are useful and judicious insights throughout the volume which bear sustained meditation and reflection. It is especially valuable to see the concept of prevenient grace deployed as a key concept in the debate about the nature of evangelism. As a whole the volume should prove to be a valuable way into evangelism for those who dismiss it as too narrow in its focus and too isolated from the concerns of the modern world. I suspect that Walker has a tough task on his hands to get the church in Australia and in North America to enter into penetrating discussion of the topics which he has chosen to address. If this volume can get the conversation started, it will have proved its worth.

However, what we have before us is fundamentally a first word, and I have several reservations. First, the book does not quite hang together as a coherent whole. It is not clear, for example, how the last chapter relates to the rest of the book, and I suspect that here his approach falls between two stools. It is clearly aimed at the general reader, but it cannot get into the topics or points of view it discusses with the kind of depth and rigour which they deserve. The curtain is pulled back, we are given a glimpse of various possibilities, but we want to see a lot more before we make any considered judgements. Hence it would be exaggerated to construe what we have here as an adequate theology of evangelism. Secondly, although I am very sympathetic to the use made of the notion of prevenient grace as a controlling concept, I feel that Walker plays down the deep offence of the gospel. There is too smooth a view of how the gospel speaks to the concerns of the contemporary situation. There is no sense of the need for substantial cognitive transfiguration if the gospel is to be believed and obeyed. Perhaps we need a lot more on the full work of the Holy Spirit in evangelism to complete the picture. More importantly, I find the focus on the secular person unconvincing. This has heuristic value at times in evangelism and theology, but it involves generalisations which cannot be sustained, and it will tend to ignore the extraordinary diversity which confronts us among unbelievers in the modern world.

William J. Abraham

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

## The Spark That Ignites.

By Robert E. Coleman. Foreword by Billy Graham. Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1989. Pp. 162. Paperback \$12.95.

Revival is a word common to the evangelical vocabulary. It is part of the history of our nation's religious journey, but it is rarely understood in the light of biblical counsel. It is likewise rarely understood in light of the individual believer's pilgrimage and the role that each person can play in the process of spiritual growth and renewal. Both growth and renewal are, after all, God's gifts. God alone through the Holy Spirit orchestrates the process. But—and this is one of the key points of emphasis in this book—for revival to come, individual believers must want it. There must be a deep abiding craving for an encounter with the God of grace and forgiveness. There must also be the willingness to pay the price of steadfast prayer, earnest repentance, and a turning to God in faith, believing that Christ will indeed break down the "dividing walls of hostility" that prevent the winds of revival from bringing new life into the parched and crippled hearts of Christians and churches.

Dr. Coleman has done us a favor in writing this book. For one thing he has helped to clear away misunderstandings concerning the nature of spiritual revival. He notes that revival is not an engineered event included in the annual schedule of traditional church life. Rather, revival is a gift extended by the hand of an active God whose love for people never ceases and whose Spirit breaks into our little closed circles in ways that astonish and surprise us.

It is helpful to receive Dr. Coleman's perspective on the history of revival in a variety of times and places. The catalogue of experience in the lives of believers over the centuries and into very recent days reinforces his case for revival as an act of God. God's Spirit responds to the genuine quest of those whose hearts have been troubled by the reality of sin, the need for repentance, the sense of spiritual emptiness and the consequent cry of the soul for God.

He refers frequently to the biblical material that stresses the place of repentance, faith and prayer in the process by which the Almighty unleashes the renewing wind of the Holy Spirit. Among recent instances of revival, one that particularly blessed me was the recounting of the incredible events that emerged on the campus of Asbury College in the course of the past decade. One fruit of that time of renewal has been the instructive portrait of the process of revival through the long days and nights of uninterrupted private and corporate intercession. Prayer preceded and continued to flow as students and faculty sensed the awesome presence of God within their spirits and their fellowship.

The inclusion of a section of questions for both private and group reflection and interaction following each unit makes this book a very useful tool for small group study and sharing. The exercises in response to specific biblical passages that encourage the drafting of one's own

paraphrase of a passage provide a vital means of gaining insight at the level of understanding revival and also at the point of personal discovery of the need for each believer to quest for revival in earnest prayer. The secret is in the seeking. The power is in the response of God.

My sense is that this book can best be used as a guide for small group study. I intend to use it in my own parish with several covenant groups including ordained lay leaders. I do perceive it as a primary text in the class rooms. However, it would make excellent supplemental reading and would be immensely useful in covenant groups on campus including both students and faculty.

Donald P. Buteyn

Donald P. Buteyn is Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Bakersfield, CA., and Emeritus Professor of Evangelism and Mission at San Francisco Theological Seminary

### The Logic of Evangelism: The Creed, Spiritual Gifts, and Disciplines.

By William J. Abraham. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989. Pp. ix + 256. Paperback. \$12.95.

This is an important and timely book, and for two reasons. First, it argues cogently for the grounding of evangelism in Christian tradition; and second, it takes seriously the development of evangelism as a discipline of practical theology. Unfortunately, as Abraham explains in his opening chapter, this development is all too often impeded, on the one hand by the disdain of much of the theological academy, and on the other by the defensiveness of many evangelists. Whereas, if evangelism is indeed a vital ministry, to say nothing of a sacred trust of the church, it merits serious theological consideration and sustained intentional practice in equal measure.

To lay the groundwork for his proposal in this regard, Abraham begins by evaluating two prominent contemporary models for evangelism, proclamation and church growth. Here he is brilliantly informative, and newcomers to the field could do no better than study his assessments and pursue his documentation for further reading. He finds both approaches ultimately lacking: proclamation because it leads too readily to privatized faith and ecclesial rootlessness; church growth because it succumbs too readily to consumerism and cultural exigency.

Instead, Abraham argues for an approach which seeks to draw people into the present and coming reign of God as the most promising way of developing an authentic evangelism for our time. With an inaugurated eschatology as the touchstone (another highly informative section of the book), he proposes a method of thorough initiation into the spiritual conditions and moral obligations of Christian discipleship, making clear in the very presentation of the gospel that this is its evangelistic intent. He

stresses that this is not initiation into the church *per se*, but into the kingdom of God, another plane of existence, of which the church is the proleptic community. What this implies for the local congregation is then described in detail, through the dimensions of conversion, baptism, morality, credal beliefs, spiritual gifts and spiritual disciplines. And, having been very particular about the Christian criteria of these initiating steps, he devotes his closing chapters to the issues of secularization and inter-faith dialogue, concluding with what he describes as an embryonic Christian theology of world religions.

It is Abraham's hope that this book will be the occasion of extensive dialogue; and if his colleagues in the field give it the attention it deserves, this will most assuredly be the case. Central to the discussion will be his concept of the kingdom, the reign of God, and his insistence that initiation into this "transcendent reality" (p. 101) be the purpose of our evangelistic endeavors. Not only is this the nub of his argument, it is the cutting edge of the field as a whole, and Abraham's position is polemical in the best sense of the word. For, while his proposal centers on initiation into the reign of God, when he comes to describe the dimensions of this initiation, its "grammar" (p. 101ff.), it proves to be predominantly centered on the church. The question he raises, therefore, is whether the church is the locus of God's salvation, or whether the coming reign of God is to be found no less in the world beyond the church, not only with respect to its ultimate outcome, but also in its present reality. As Abraham rightly points out, how we answer questions such as these profoundly affects the scope and the shape of our evangelism.

Put differently, do we view the church as herald of the coming reign of God, or as its gateway? If we accept Abraham's proposal, we must clearly opt for the latter, as does he. Our evangelism is to "admit" people (p. 96), and "take them into" the reign of God (p. 119). "It is vital that we be initiated into the Christian church if we are to understand and face the full challenge of the kingdom of God on earth" (p. 133). This leaves us, however, with an unnecessarily vague concept of what the coming reign of God might mean for the rest of the world. The words justice and peace do appear throughout the book, but they are not developed. Of much more significance are the signs and wonders of the early church, which are presented as a paradigm for our present foretaste of the kingdom, the fullness of which remains an eschatological mystery. Yet the prophets of the Old Testament (from whom the book draws comparatively few referents) give us some quite specific and down-to-earth guidelines to prepare for this coming *Shalom*, and the God who thundered from Sinai must surely be as much a part of our *evangel* as the indwelling Spirit of Christ. We do not have to relegate the fullness of the reign of God quite so radically to a mysterious plane of existence, evident primarily to the initiated. There is much that the evangelist can and must say on the basis of self-evident and immutable laws of justice. Christ's little ones need to be fed, here and now, whether or not we, or they, have been initiated into anything at all. Just as important is their expropriation from present pain and suffering—the bad news for the wealthy which the evangelist

is compelled to announce along with that which is good for the poor.

All of this, however, is substance for the dialogue to which this stimulating volume impels us. As to whether it is an alternative approach to evangelism remains to be seen. What it certainly provides in the meantime is a much needed reinforcement and enrichment of a critical dimension to our evangelism, namely its necessary rootage in the church, and the concomitant necessity of the church itself always being accountable to the gospel. As such, the book is a devastating exposure of so much that passes for evangelism today, especially in the North American context, and a trumpet call to faithfulness. It is unquestionably required reading for classroom and congregation alike.

David Lowes Watson

David Lowes Watson, a past president of the Academy, is Executive Secretary for Covenant Discipleship and Christian Formation at the General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church.

## BOOK NOTES

### World-Class Cities and World Evangelization

By David B. Barrett. Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 1986.  
Pp. 60. Paperback. \$5.95.

In this book, David Barrett not only examines the past and present of world urbanization and of urban mission by Christians, but he projects the future of each. Also, he seeks to quantify this history, with attention to present status and future prospects. Further, he sets forward a means of evaluating the progress—or lack of it—of world evangelization today and outlines a strategy for its fulfillment.

### The House Church: A Model for Renewing the Church

By Del Birkey. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988.  
Pp. 192. Paperback. \$18.95.

Del Birkey proposes the house church structure as a key to continuing renewal in the church today. After a biblical and historical look at the significance of the house church, he looks at a model of ministry appropriate to that structure. In light of this model, he develops a theology of renewal through the servant leadership of both women and men, personal and corporate giftedness, participatory worship, and community commitment.

### The Biblical Principles of Discipleship

By Allan Coppedge. Foreword by Robert E. Coleman. Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1989. Pp. 175. \$13.95.

Most books on discipling are concerned with implementation. They are aimed at motivating Christians to do something practical in response to the church's need. But receiving less attention are the biblical and theological principles underlying the discipling process. In this book, Allan Coppedge examines God's purposes and the ways they are spelled out in the Bible. Everything a Christian does is to glorify God in three ways: through a growing relationship between God and oneself, the development of Christ-likeness, and fruitful service.

### Liberating News: A Theology of Contextual Evangelization

By Orlando E. Costas. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989.  
Pp. 196. Paperback. \$12.95.

Costas approaches the topic of contextual evangelization from the standpoint of "the poor, the powerless, and the oppressed," writing "against the backdrop of the radical evangelical tradition in dialogue with other streams of the larger ecumenical church." He begins by exploring the biblical roots of contextual evangelization and then defines its foundation as the Trinity, which he describes as a community. Costas views conversion not as a single event but rather as a continual transformative process that involves a passage from self-absorption to active communal involvement, reflecting his evangelical commitment and enlightened social thinking.

### The Christian Faith and Its Contemporary Rivals

By Richard B. Cunningham. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1988.  
Pp. 215. Paperback. \$9.95.

Richard B. Cunningham addresses the issue of doing Christian apologetics in a world of instant communication and cultural intermingling. After defining the current situation and examining the wide contours of the Christian worldview, he describes and critiques those worldviews that he regards as the major rivals of Christianity: atheism, naturalism, secular humanism, Marxism, nihilism, and the major world religions.

### The Jesus of Heresy and History: The Discovery and Meaning of the Nag Hammadi Gnostic Library

By John Dart. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988.  
Pp. 192. Paperback. \$18.95.

The Nag Hammadi manuscripts, discovered in 1945, shed new light on Gnosticism. Forgotten for over sixteen centuries, the Gnostic religion

was related to but radically distinct from the Judeo-Christian tradition. In this enlightening study, John Dart examines the motifs and symbolism found in the Gnostic writings, and explores the impact they had on Christian history and philosophy. His conclusions are profoundly significant for our evangelism today.

### Spiritual Leadership, Responsible Management: A Guide for Leaders of the Church

By Michael T. Dibbert. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989. Pp. 207. Paperback. \$8.95.

The church needs spiritual leaders who manage well. This practical and insightful handbook tries neither to impose secular modern management practices that treat the church as a "business," nor to present a brief for the so-called New Testament church under the credo "small is beautiful." Rather Michael Dibbert tries to bring together New Testament models for leadership and enhance them with good management sense so that the church can fulfill its ministry-related management responsibilities without losing its sense of community.

### Christian Thought Revisited: Three Types of Theology

By Justo L. González. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989. Pp. 185. Paperback. \$15.95.

This companion to Justo L. González' three-volume *History of Christian Thought, Revised*, examines the three main types of theology that developed during early Christianity. Dr. González traces the development of the early theologies of Carthage, Alexandria, Asia Minor, and Syria, in terms of the writings and work of the early theologians Tertullian, Origen, and Irenaeus. He demonstrates the main category of interest of each theologian: Tertullian, moral (Law); Origen, metaphysical (truth); Irenaeus, pastoral (history).

### The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology: Toward a Christ-Centered Approach

By Adrio König. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989. Pp. 248. Paperback. \$16.95.

Adrio König makes an impressive case for viewing the entire history of Jesus Christ as the content of eschatology, not simply his resurrection and return in glory. This book combines critical dogmatic inquiry with careful exegetical work in the finest of the tradition in biblical theology. The result is a book on eschatology which is irenic in tone, relevant to contemporary issues and surprising in its simplicity.

### Organize to Evangelize: A Manual for Church Growth

By Larry L. Lewis. Foreword by Adrian Rogers. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1988. Pp. 132. Paperback. \$5.95.

The principles described in this volume were tested in churches that ranged from a sixteen member mission to a more than three thousand member congregation. In each setting, Larry L. Lewis led churches he served as pastor in remarkable growth, using the Flake Formula—discover the prospects, expand the organization, train the workers, provide the space, go after the people. In this book, Dr. Lewis explains how to apply these and other evangelistic principles to congregational life.

### Explaining Your Faith Without Losing Your Friends

By Alister E. McGrath. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989. Pp. 111. Paperback. \$4.95.

This book, ideally suited for students, discussion groups, and individual study, identifies the main questions and objections encountered in evangelism, especially on college campuses, and goes on to give crisp, incisive, and convincing replies. Alister McGrath gives suggestions for further reading to ensure that the reader is fully equipped to deal with these questions and objections at whatever level. It will be welcomed by all who are concerned with explaining and defending the Christian faith in the modern world.

### Addiction and Grace

By Gerald G. May, M.D. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988. Pp. 200. \$16.95.

Drawing on his experiences as a psychiatrist working with the chemically dependent, Gerald G. May explores the psychology and physiology of addiction as viewed from the perspective of contemplative spirituality. It examines the "processes of attachment" that lead to addiction and describes the relationship between addiction and spiritual awareness. It also explores the theological and spiritual qualities of grace, and the role of grace in nurturing and sustaining human freedom.

### World in View

By R. Keith Parks. Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 1987. Pp. 60. Paperback. \$5.95.

As president of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, R. Keith Parks leads the largest US-based foreign missions force of career missionaries in the world. He focuses on sharpening Southern

Baptists' basic missionary objective of evangelism that results in the starting of churches which can thrive in the local culture. The subject matter is missions: message and method, biblical heritage, stewardship, and missionary commitment. *World in View* is a call to fellow Christians to that level of praying for the world which grows out of a commitment to keep the whole world in view.

### Encountering Jesus—Encountering Judaism: A Dialogue

By Karl Rahner and Pinchas Lapide. Translated by Davis Perkins. New York: Crossroad, 1987. Pp. viii + 111. Paperback. \$8.95.

The dialogue that transpires within these pages covers the major points of divergence between Judaism and Christianity. Starting with the assertion of the Second Vatican Council that God's gifts to the people of Israel are irrevocable, Pinchas Lapide, an Orthodox Jewish New Testament scholar, and the late Karl Rahner show how the Council's reassertion of Pauline theology places the whole discussion on a new level. Some of the most intriguing differences that emerge in the vigorous give-and-take of this dialogue are not those between Christian and Jew but those between biblical theologian and systematic theologian.

### Creating Communities of the Kingdom: New Testament Models of Church Planting

By David W. Shenk and Ervin R. Stutzman. Foreward by Myron S. Augsburger. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988. Pp. 229. Paperback. \$9.95.

This is a modern book with 2,000-year-old roots. The authors constantly look back to the New Testament for models of church planting. Then they look forward and wrestle with the timeless challenge of applying the basic scriptural principles and insights to a modern people. In this process, they bring into focus a dimension missing in much popular discussion on church growth. They show that the parish is the center of mission; the parish in mission is concerned about the quality of life in the whole community; and being the people of God is the criterion for success.

### Signs of the Spirit: How God Reshapes the Church

By Howard A. Snyder. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989. Pp. 336. Paperback. \$14.95.

In *Signs of the Spirit*, Howard Snyder analyzes church renewal from a historical perspective, focusing especially on the Montanist, Pietist, Methodist, and Moravian movements. The recurring themes within these movements and throughout the church today include primitivism, the "new work" of the Holy Spirit, judgment on existing patterns of the institutional church, commitment to the counterculture, more intimate

fellowship for prayer and Bible study, nontraditional leadership, lay ministry, and evangelistic vitality. Dr. Snyder then synthesizes the lessons of church renewal in history and applies them in such a way that we can build a renewal strategy for the local church today.

### Power Encounters Among Christians in the Western World

Edited by Kevin Springer. Introduction and Afterword by John Wimber. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988. Pp. xxxiv + 218. Paperback. \$10.95.

This introduction to the work of the Holy Spirit in today's world presents the testimonies of prominent Christian leaders about the remarkable impact of signs and wonders in their lives and ministries. Kevin Springer devotes particular attention to the effect of the spirit as it is evidenced in connection with John Wimber's ministry. With theological sophistication and insight, Springer shares theories about the impact of God's word. Included are the stories of John White, Charles Kraft, Jack Deere, Terry Virgo, Anne Watson, Jackie Pullinger and C. Peter Wagner.

### Guardians of the Great Commission: The Story of Women in Modern Missions

By Ruth A. Tucker. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988. Pp. 278. Paperback. \$15.95.

Although in the early years of the modern missionary movement women were denied the right to function as bona fide missionaries, during the last half of the nineteenth century they took up the challenge of breaking down the barriers and meeting the missionary needs overseas. They soon became a majority—as is still true today. *Guardians of the Great Commission* features accounts of daring pioneer missionaries, innovative concepts in mission strategy, and impassioned personal behind-the-scenes accounts of romance and intrigue. While focusing on women, Dr. Tucker does not isolate women's missionary outreach from that of men. The book shows the sacrificial dedication of both men and women as they have worked together in their combined efforts to complete the unfinished task of world evangelism.

The Book Notes for this issue of the *Journal* were compiled by Marigene Chamberlain, Circulation Editor.

## THE ACADEMY FOR EVANGELISM IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

### Sixteenth Annual Meeting

### MINUTES

The sixteenth annual meeting of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education was held on the campus of Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, October 6-8, 1988. The meeting was opened at 7:30 p.m. by President Raymond J. Bakke who introduced our host, Charles Shaver, who warmly welcomed the Academy to the N.T.S. campus. Since bad weather had delayed the arrival of our keynote speaker, Michael Green, we proceeded with a "Master Class" presentation made by Ronald K. Crandall, McCreless Professor of Evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary, who walked the Academy members through his core course in missions/evangelism which is required of all Asbury students. A spirited discussion on teaching evangelism followed with many expressing a desire for similar presentations to be made regularly at annual meetings of the Academy. The evening meeting concluded with an invitation for all to browse the excellent display of evangelism texts and resources procured from more than twenty publishers and prepared by Thomas McAlpine of MARC and George Rice of the Nazarene Publishing House.

On Friday morning Vice President Richard Armstrong led devotions, drawing on Romans 8:28 and sharing from his own life journey. President Bakke then introduced our keynote speaker, Michael Green, Professor of Evangelism at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia, who addressed the Academy on "Mobilizing the Local Church for Evangelism." His opening challenge was a reminder that evangelism is not primarily learned through books or a classroom lecture, but by a mentoring relationship of observation and co-participation. He suggested the neglect of this model could be why so few of our students actually become pastors who lead their congregations in evangelism, and why churches in Canada and in the United States are stagnated and discouraged. Dr. Green went on to share his observations of the seven most needed qualities for renewal and effective evangelism, and suggested nine areas requiring reassessment in our teaching and training efforts. Finally, a model to accomplish these teaching goals was offered. Two or three times a year Michael Green enlists students to join him in leading an ecumenical area-wide crusade/mission involving street theater, open-air performances of all kinds, brief testimonies, debate, music, small groups, preaching and personal evangelism. Following his address the Academy warmly welcomed Michael Green to its fellowship and engaged in significant debate and discussion of his premises and model.

The afternoon session was led by Thomas McAlpine of MARC who reviewed the present state of evangelism literature and resources. Three categories of evangelism were used to evaluate present materials: personal evangelism, media evangelism, and contextual evangelism. The discussion which followed led the Academy to explore: "people groups," James Fowler's stages of faith development, Gallup's recent research on unchurched Americans, urban evangelism, reaching blacks, conversion, and theological issues. After a break the Academy returned for a report on "Contemporary Trends in Evangelism in Mainline Denominations" by Dennis Hatfield, Director of Evangelism for the Ohio Baptist Convention and member of the Evangelism Working Group of the National Council of Churches. A few years ago evangelism executives in mainline denominations believed "everything we do is evangelism," but declining membership statistics forced a re-evaluation. First the N.C.C. tried to produce generic evangelism materials, but they didn't work. Next, directors came together to learn from each other agreeing that rules of "politeness" had to be abandoned. Gordon Turner, United Church of Canada, came with provocative new research and sent the representatives out into the community to interview and dialogue with people about evangelism. The result was electric. A new era of evangelism resourcing began. After Dr. Hatfield finished his presentation, several others shared what had been happening recently in their own denominations, seminaries and regions.

Friday evening the Academy was hosted for a banquet by Dr. Jack Sanders, President of Nazarene Theological Seminary. Following the meal and Dr. Sanders' comments to the Academy, the evening address was delivered by former AETE president Patrick Sena on Roman Catholic models of evangelization with special attention to the Catholic Parish Mission. This Monday through Friday sacramental model of local parish evangelization built around biblical preaching, teaching, healing, worship and renewal was well received by the members, and Fr. Sena's warm and radiant spirit engaged us all in lively discussion during a time of questions and answers.

Saturday morning began with devotions at 9:00 a.m. led by Charles Gailey, Director of the NTS School of World Mission and Evangelism. Following devotions, President Bakke called the business meeting to order. The first item of old business was the matter of dividing the office of Secretary-Treasurer and securing a nomination for the office of AETE Secretary. Charles Shaver was nominated and elected. Ronald Crandall will continue as Treasurer. Minutes were accepted as printed in the Journal. The Treasurer's Report was distributed and approved. It was requested that a list of "Contributing Institutions" be made available and that members whose institutions have not contributed their \$50 "dues" be encouraged to do so. David Watson, Editor of the AETE Journal, reported that we would be mailing out 600-700 copies of Volume Three, and that next year's Journal would complete our first commitment of publishing four volumes. It was moved/seconded/carried that following the completion of Volume Four we expand the Journal by sixteen pages to include lists of active members, contributing institutions, cumulative

indices, bibliographies and other helpful items. David Watson affirmed the invaluable work of the circulation editor, Marigene Chamberlain, and the funding provided for her by the Board of Discipleship in Nashville. The members decided to invite Marigene to be our guest at next year's meeting of the Academy. Members then explored "special issues" in evangelism which could be the themes of future Journals, including Black Evangelism, Women and Evangelism, and International and World Evangelism. It was strongly recommended that Bill Pannell function as Associate Editor for Volume Five which would address the first of these concerns, "Black Evangelism."

Other business included receiving into full membership Charles Gailey, Douglass Lewis, and Tony Preston, and into associate membership Gary Demarest and Charles Miller. By unanimous ballot it was voted that the bylaws be changed to reflect our newly elected offices of Secretary and Treasurer. Authorization was given to our new Secretary to secure a "logo" design and to have printed our own AETE stationery and envelopes. Words of appreciation were extended to all who helped make the sixteenth annual meeting of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education such a success. The next meeting of the Academy will be October 5-7, 1989 at Luther Northwestern Seminary in Minneapolis. After a closing prayer by Robert Price, the meeting was adjourned by president Bakke.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Ronald K. Crandall  
Treasurer/Acting Secretary

## The Seventeenth Annual Meeting

The Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the Academy will be held at Luther Northwestern Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, October 5th, 6th and 7th, 1989.

Oswald Hoffman, Evangelist and Former Speaker on the Lutheran Hour, will present the keynote address on Thursday evening: "Reflections from My Life as an Evangelist."

The sessions on Friday will focus on the theme of International Evangelism, with presentations by William J. Abraham, Perkins School of Theology, Norman Thomas, United Theological Seminary and Emmett Johnson, American Baptist Churches in USA. The annual banquet will be held on Friday evening, with the Presidential Address by Raymond J. Bakke.

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

## The Eighteenth Annual Meeting

### PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT

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