



9

A Two-Thirds World evaluation of contemporary Evangelical missiology

DAVID
TAI-WOONG
LEE

TO WRITE AN EVALUATION of Evangelical missiology (hereafter referred to as EM) of the past half century is a formidable job. For the sake of limiting the scope of our argument to guidelines given by such documents as the Lausanne Covenant, this chapter will apply the Iguassu Affirmation and the so-called “main axioms” delineated by Donald McGavran (Glasser & McGavran, 1983, pp. 100-112). It will then become somewhat clear that the EM that this writer aims to evaluate consists of a body of missiological materials that have been produced after the mid-20th century in alignment with the contemporary Evangelical Movement, expressed through such Evangelical gatherings as the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne, Switzerland in 1974 (Lausanne Congress hereafter). This date conveniently coincides with greater participation of Two-Thirds World Evangelicals in formulating EM.¹ First, an attempt will be made to sort out different streams that have merged to create a modern EM. As a summary statement, a chronological perspective of the development of EM will follow. Finally, an evaluation will be made of this missiology.

Major Influences in the Development of Evangelical Missiology

Historically, a number of factors have influenced the formulation of Evangelical missiology. It is important that we take a look at some of the major factors that have helped to shape EM in order to evaluate them properly.

¹ Although missionary work from the Two-Thirds World began much earlier, it was in the 1970s that we find Western missiologists becoming aware of the new movement, with such activities as the All-Asia Mission Consultation in Seoul, Korea in 1973 (see Nelson, 1976, p. 109ff.).

First, the European missionary movement and its missiology must be mentioned. European missiology has its roots in European missionary work, which began as early as the 17th century (Rommen, 1991). The study of mission began in 1622 with the very practical purpose of training missionaries for service in the East Indies. In 1702, another attempt to formulate missiology emerged with the founding of Halle University, which was established for the purpose of training missionaries. Gustav Warneck was their missiologist, and by his effort missiology began to take shape (Thomas, 1989, p. 103). By the time the center of the missionary movement began to shift from Europe to North America in the early 20th century, European missiology seemed to have gained its own characteristics. However, in an attempt to be accepted as a part of the academic discipline in the university, it became scientific and theoretical.² We shall see that this trend in missiology continued even in North America, when in the 1970s EM began to gain its own identity (Scherer, October 1987, p. 508).³

Second, the Edinburgh missionary conference in 1910 and subsequent major conferences held by the International Missionary Council (IMC hereafter) and the World Council of Churches (WCC hereafter) assemblies have influenced EM in one way or another. Until the Evangelicals began to hold their own missionary conferences in the late 1960s, both Evangelicals and non-Evangelicals had worked together to formulate missiology (Scherer, 1987, pp. 39, 165; Scherer & Bevans, 1992, p. xvi). Even after Evangelicals withdrew from ecumenical circles, a number of the same themes found their way into EM,⁴ such as gospel and culture, contextualization, a trinitarian concept of mission, the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility, and dialogue as a form of evangelism.⁵

Third, after the 1960s, Evangelical missionary conferences and consultations have tremendously influenced the formulation of EM. The Lausanne Congress in 1974 and the subsequent Lausanne Movement have probably influenced the shaping of EM more than any other single

² Edward Rommen (1987) insists that "German missionary theory first embraced and later eschewed the social science" in the 19th century and up to the middle of the 20th century.

³ This trend in missiology roughly coincides with the period when the American Society of Missiology was admitted into the Council on the Study of Religion. Louis Luzbetak said on this occasion: "On this day missiology becomes a fully recognized academic discipline." There is also "a qualitative ... and a quantitative increase in teaching programs related to missiology, particularly in Evangelical seminaries and schools of world mission, especially between 1975 and 1985." The number of missiological issues that have surfaced also warrants this view. Scherer (1987, p. 35) argues, "Before 1950, the study of the 'theology of mission' in today's sense hardly existed. It is even later for the Evangelicals in my opinion." See also Glasser & McGavran (1983, p. 8).

⁴ See Utuk (1994, p. 110). Utuk argues that the Ecumenical Movement has been one of the influences in the shift of the Evangelical position in mission from 1966 to 1974.

⁵ The ecumenical circle had the IMC and the WCC as their forum to dialogue regarding cultural issues. For Evangelicals, it was after the Lausanne Congress in 1974 that the relationship between gospel and culture received attention (see Scherer & Bevans, 1999, pp. 4-5). For example, "*Missio Dei*" was the theme of the 1952 Willingen conference, and "Contextualization" was the theme of the 1972 TEF report of the WCC. Evangelicals were introduced to contextualization at the Lausanne Congress, and it was in 1982 that a consultation on "Contextualization" was convened at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School campus (see Hesselgrave, 1978, p. 87; *Trinity World Forum*, Spring, 1982; Scherer & Bevans, 1992, pp. 263ff, 276ff; Thomas, 1995, p. 117).

movement in the history of Evangelicalism.⁶ Some of the outspoken missiological voices came from the more radical discipleship camp. These voices have particularly affected the Lausanne Movement to no small degree.⁷ Meanwhile, the WEF Missions Commission and the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement, with their own respective missiological position, have also added richness to EM, as we shall see in the evaluation section below.⁸

Fourth, the Two-Thirds World missionary movement began to take shape in the 1970s. By the end of the 1980s, it began to draw the attention of some Western missiologists. In the 1990s, it was well established as a strong and newer missionary force.⁹ Its influence on the formulation of EM may have been meager in the past, with the exception of some of the outspoken voices representing the “radical discipleship” camp. Some of the Two-Thirds World leaders from more independent groups such as the Third World Mission Association (TWMA) have also been active. One can predict that the contributions from Two-Thirds World missionaries will increase significantly in the new millennium. By the 1990s, EM began to take a global character. Missiology done from the

West alone is no longer adequate. As we enter the new millennium, we will see yet another paradigm shift in EM as missionaries from the Two-Thirds World exceed in numbers the force from the West (Pate, 1991, p. 59; Anderson, 1988, p. 114).

Participation of the Two-Thirds World mission force in the formulation of missiology began early in the ecumenical camp. With the birth of the IMC and the WCC, a forum was provided for their participation. Through conciliatory effort, ecumenical missiology began to emerge (Lossky et al., 1991, p. 529; Bosch, 1980, pp. 180-181). For Evangelicals, it was not until the Lausanne Congress in 1974 that the Two-Thirds World began to be active in the world-class missionary conferences contributing towards the formulation of EM. Since then, in virtually all of the ecumenical world missionary conferences, the Two-Thirds World has had a lion's share in the formulation of EM. Some observers even predict that with the drastic changes taking place in the new millennium and the rapid growth of the Two-Thirds World missionary force, most of the missiological textbooks written from the Western perspective will become obsolete.¹⁰ This may mean that we have to write a whole new

⁶ Scherer & Bevans (1992, p. xviii) state, “Lausanne 1974 ‘marks the high point in the development of Evangelical mission theology.’”

⁷ These voices represent the position that has demanded that greater prominence be given to social concerns (see Scherer, 1987, pp. 194-195; Scherer & Bevans, 1992, p. xviii).

⁸ Glasser (1993, p. 19) argues that the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement had the desire for a “last big push” to evangelize the world. Many of the WEF Missions Commission’s recent membership would identify with that goal, unlike the “radical discipleship” camp. A series of publications include Taylor (1991, 1997), Harley (1995), Ferris (1995), and this volume. Most significant about these is that all of them were the joint product of both Western and Two-Thirds World mission leaders. The AD 2000 and Beyond Movement had their major congress in Seoul, Korea in 1995 and in South Africa in 1997. The majority of the participants were from the Two-Thirds World.

⁹ Three important research projects attest to this development. James Wong (1976), Marlin Nelson (1976a, 1976b), and Larry Pate (1989) have contributed towards helping both the West and the Two-Thirds World discover the new missionary movement.

¹⁰ This voice was raised by some of the Evangelical leaders from the Two-Thirds World who attended the Iguassu Consultation on Missiological Issues in October 1999.

series of missiological textbooks that include the Two-Thirds World perspectives.

Fifth, at least two things should be mentioned in relation to North America's role in the formulation of EM. One is the number of missionaries that have been dispatched. Beginning in 1956, two-thirds of the entire missionary force came from North America. After reaching its plateau in the 1970s, this missionary force sustained its momentum for three decades. Keeping in step with this unprecedented growth, there was tremendous development both in mission structures as well as in missiology.¹¹ The missionary work has provided field tests for the missiologist. Furthermore, missionaries themselves became the missiologists. The missionaries who had first-hand knowledge of cross-cultural work wrote many missiological books.

The other item of note regarding North America is the proliferation of mission schools. After the 1910 Edinburgh missionary conference, a number of missionary schools sprouted in North America. The Kennedy School of World Mission, Disciples of Christ College of Missions, and Union Theological Seminary were some of the schools that either taught

mission or were founded as missionary training schools. By 1934, most of the theological schools taught some subjects related to missions or comparative religions (Thomas, 1989, p. 104). It was, however, after the 1960s and '70s, with the emergence of schools such as the Fuller School of World Mission and the School of World Mission and Evangelism of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, that the impact on EM was most evident.¹² These schools and others like them have played a key role in creating a consensus on what the modern curriculum of the Evangelical missiological discipline would look like.¹³ This period during the 1970s coincides with a period in which missiology was accepted as a separate discipline on its own by the academia (Thomas, 1989, p. 105). It was probably scholars from these schools that formulated the modern version of a philosophy of education in mission for the first time in the history of Evangelical mission.¹⁴ Donald McGavran and Alan Tippett from Fuller School of World Mission and David Hesselgrave and Herbert Kane from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School are some of the representatives in this effort who laid the foundations for their schools.¹⁵ This period probably

¹¹ See Anderson (1988, pp. 113-114). According to Coote (1982), "EFMA/IFMA taken as a whole, 1968 marked the beginning of a plateau, and this plateau has prevailed for almost two decades." This is the period when the Two-Thirds World missionary movement began to gain its momentum. See also Scherer (1999, pp. 10-11).

¹² These schools are used as representatives of the school of world mission.

¹³ See Anderson (1988, pp. 111-112). A survey indicates that nearly 1,000 Ph.D., Th.D., S.T.D., and Ed.D. related dissertations in mission were accepted during 1945-1985. Alan Tippett (1987, pp. xi-xxv) argues that the 1960s and early 1970s were the formative years in missiology. He then goes on to introduce a philosophical background for mission curriculum design.

¹⁴ It was the Evangelical schools that kept intact. For the non-Evangelicals, "They were less able, however, to impact the curricular changes of the 1960s and 1970s except in Evangelical seminaries in which the missionary mandate remained strong" (Thomas, 1989, p. 106).

¹⁵ See Scherer (October 1987, p. 512) and Tippett (1974). See also Anderson (1988, p. 110), relating to Herbert Kane.

marks the most significant time in the development and rebirth of EM.¹⁶ In this regard, the integration of social science and traditional biblical themes such as evangelism and the church has acted as a catalytic agent.¹⁷ EM has now begun to comprise both theory and practice, but it would be inappropriate to call this body of missiological literature “managerial” (we shall address some of the reasons for this objection in the evaluation section of this paper).¹⁸

Missiology that began with the birth of European mission has had a number of paradigm shifts, with the convergence of these influences creating EM in North American soil. For the last half century, we have witnessed tremendous progress and change, both positive and negative. More recently, the missionary movement from the Two-Thirds World contributed towards adding a significant new perspective by reflecting on its own missionary experiences. We will mention some of the details in the evaluation below.

A Summary Statement to This Point

Prior to the Lausanne Movement, missiology was predominantly Western in its

character. European missiology had become the foundation upon which the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches would build their own missiology.¹⁹ These would later develop into what we now know as ecumenical missiology, which was a missiology formulated with the concept of the West moving to the non-West. We will see that the subsequent missiological trends continued to hold this view. In this stage, there was no significant development in EM. It was still in its infant stage, for as of yet there was no consensus on what missiology was, let alone what EM was.

After the Lausanne Congress, Evangelicals from both the West and the Two-Thirds World increasingly worked together to formulate EM. This has helped to highlight the contribution from both perspectives. One of the most significant changes in EM after the Lausanne Congress has been in opting for holistic missiology.²⁰ As early or late as the Berlin World Evangelization Congress in 1966, EM had a single focal point: evangelization of the world was what the purpose of mission was all about.

After Lausanne, EM crossed the “Rubicon.” Since then, at least two camps have

¹⁶ Arthur Glasser (1985, p. 10) argues that with his epochal work, *The Bridges of God*, Evangelicals were stimulated to begin “evangelical theologizing.” It was during this period that widely read textbooks such as *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective* by J. Herbert Kane (1976) also appeared, along with a host of other books by the same author in the 1970s. Anderson (1988, pp. 110-111) claims that “spin-offs from McGavran’s movement” include a series of other missiological developments.

¹⁷ Tim Stafford (1986) claims that social science was integrated with evangelism.

¹⁸ Samuel Escobar (see chapter 7) uses the term “managerial missiology” to describe the Church Growth School represented by McGavran and others.

¹⁹ See Verkuyl (1978). Hartenstein, Freytag, Hendrik Kraemer, J. C. Hoekendijk, Max Warren, and Lesslie Newbigin are some of the popular names that appear in the history of the Ecumenical Movement prior to the Lausanne Congress. Except for some of the Latin American theologians and missiologists, activities of Evangelical missiologists from the rest of the world were still in the embryonic stage. See also Kinnamon & Cope (1997, pp. 9-40). Western voices were still dominating the platform at least until the 1970s.

²⁰ Utuk (1994) argues that at Lausanne the “two-mandate view” was affirmed.

coexisted in Evangelical circles. Both are holistic in their approach. One camp stresses intentional equality between evangelism and social responsibility. This view is represented by John Stott and some Latin Americans, Asians, and Africans such as Samuel Escobar, René Padilla, Orlando Costas, and Vinay Samuel.²¹ The other position has the evangelization of the world as its primary focus. This camp is represented by those who later helped to stage the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement, plus some from the World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission.²² The rest of Evangelicals will be found in between these two poles. Although there was active participation by the Two-Thirds World through different consultations and missionary congresses, the make-up of EM was still very North American. However, inevitable changes began to take place with the rapid growth of the Two-Thirds World missionaries and the shift of the Evangelical population from the West to the Two-Thirds World in the 1980s and '90s. Only two significant paradigm shifts will be mentioned here.

First is the change from theory based missiology to social science based missiology. In the beginning of the study of missiology, the theory of mission was a prominent factor (Shenk, 1996). More recent EM then took another sharp turn. With the coming of the modern Church Growth Movement ushered in by Donald

McGavran, Peter Wagner, and others, social science became an important component of EM. There was an emphasis on the "harvest field," based on homogeneous principles. Subsequent "frontier missiology" dominated agendas for EM in the last three decades of the 20th century. Therefore, it would be absurd to speak about modern EM without mentioning a very large segment of missiological literature representing this trend.

Second, a change from general missiology to contextual missiology and then to global missiology took place. Western EM opened the way for doing missiology from a different context, as the concept of contextualization became a prominent missiological motif in the last two decades in Evangelical circles. This is particularly true in the Two-Thirds World. Not only missiology, but also the whole of the theological method has been affected by this phenomenon. More recently, there is new interest in the formulation of a globalized perspective of missiology, keeping step with broader currents of globalization. It is important to note that it was during this period that EM began to show its distinct identity. Therefore, we will refer back to this period as we evaluate EM.

World evangelization again received attention, especially with the birth and growth of the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement in the 1990s. Strategies of mission have received much attention in conjunc-

²¹ Utuk (1994, p. 107) argues that although there were other "interest" groups, "some combined their efforts with the Radical Discipleship group to produce a Covenant that, for the first time in the Evangelical Movement, affirmed in unambiguous tone that 'biblical evangelism is inseparable from social responsibility,'" quoting Padilla (1976, p. 11). See also Stott (1975, pp. 23, 27), quoted by Utuk.

²² Those representing opposite poles would be persons such as Donald McGavran, David Hesselgrave, and J. Robertson McQuilken. See McGavran (1996, pp. 252-253) and McQuilken (1993, p. 175). There are also exchanges between Hesselgrave and Stott on this issue in *Trinity World Forum* (Spring 1990 and Spring 1991). This issue was also featured in the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (July 1999). There seems to be consensus on "holism" itself among Evangelicals, as the recent Iguassu Affirmation proclaims. Nevertheless, in terms of giving equal status or refusing to interlock both evangelism and social responsibility, Evangelicals are still polarized.

tion with the AD 2000 Movement and the optimism that came as a result of this strategic understanding. Such concepts as the “10/40 window” have received special attention. In addition, various forms of the theory of “unreached people groups” became the dominant theme for EM, at least in some sectors of both the West and the Two-Thirds World. This theory coincided with the strategy of discontinuity. It was during this period that the concept of “power encounter” began to occupy a prominent position in EM (see Warner, 1985, and Wagner, 1986). It was introduced in order to bring balance to EM, which was clouded with social science. Now it occupies a permanent place in EM. It is, therefore, not unfair to characterize the EM of this period as being practical in its essential nature.

We have so far looked at how EM took its shape in the last half century. We have for the sake of convenience used landmarks such as the Lausanne Congress as reference points upon which to hang different missiological developments. We will now attempt to evaluate EM from a Two-Thirds World perspective.

An Evaluation of Evangelical Missiology From a Two-Thirds World Perspective

EM as a discipline

Like the rest of the academic disciplines, missiology was also developed in the undercurrents of the Modernity Movement (Lee, 1997). Missiology in this form had its strength in theologizing and “principlizing” mission. For those with “intuitional” and “concrete-relational”²³ worldviews from some parts of the Two-Thirds World, this was too theoretical, and

it also came at an odd period of time. The Two-Thirds World missionary movement was still in the infant stage of growth.

It was probably after this period that EM as we now know it began to be profiled with various influences merging in a great stream. At least two distinct changes were favorable to the Two-Thirds World missionaries. First, some sort of consensus was reached among Evangelicals on the philosophy of education in studying missiology. Thus the schools of world mission with well-developed curricula began to sprout in different parts of North America and other parts of the world. It was this form of EM that was spread to the Two-Thirds World through at least three ways. Students who came to study in North America from the Two-Thirds World were the major means of exportation. Missiological literature that was distributed to the rest of the world was another means of spreading this form of EM. Finally, Western missionaries who were serving in the Two-Thirds World have also significantly contributed to this end.

The second change in EM that favored Two-Thirds World missionaries was the integration of social science and pragmatism in the 1970s. Without such measures, EM might have ended up as just another academic acrobatic, which the Two-Thirds World finds less relevant.

Samuel Escobar (see pages 107-109) gives us some helpful insights when he mentions three directions of what he calls “post-imperial missiology.” These are the renewed search for biblical patterns, the critical work of writing and interpreting the history of missionary activity, and entering into partnership with churches in the Two-Thirds World. I would add a fourth key ingredient, the integration of

²³ I am using Hesselgrave’s (1991, pp. 305-340) division of different cognitive styles in accordance with different worldviews here. He gives at least two different worldviews with their cognitive processes in addition to the more conceptual thinking of the West.

missiology with the social sciences. This latter component would be an additional important direction that EM has taken since the Lausanne Congress. These four seem to be the general description of the direction of EM as a whole. Therefore, if Escobar's intention was to dichotomize missiology that has integrated social science with missiology not so integrated, his divisions are inappropriate.

Furthermore, closely following his argument, one cannot but conclude that one of his most important criteria for deciding the kind of missiology is how one views "social/human needs." Escobar has an obvious preference for "a critical missiology from the periphery," represented by such persons as René Padilla and Orlando Costas from Latin America. They claim to take the biblical text more seriously than others. What this actually means is "an exploration into the depths of the social significance of the basic Christian truths" (see page 113). People with this presupposition claim that "Evangelical depth" is missing in "managerial missiology" and that such depth is what makes sense to those who minister "in the midst of poverty and with the pain of social transitions" (page 113). Thus the "Evangelical depth" is none other than social concern for them. In the 1976 post-Lausanne symposium, Padilla (1976, p. 192) goes one step further in the following remarks: "Lausanne had updated the Evangelical agenda by eliminating North American pragmatism, returning biblical theology to its proper basis, giving a deathblow to superficial church planting, eliminating the dichotomy between evangelism and church

renewal, and refusing to separate conversion from a radical change in life-style." Scherer's comment (see Padilla, 1976, p. 192) is incisive: "In his [Padilla's] view, biblical evangelism is *inseparable* from social responsibility and church renewal" (emphasis added).²⁴

Not all Evangelicals from the Two-Thirds World will agree with this theological position. Needless to say, neither will all Evangelicals from the Two-Thirds World agree with the way the term "managerial" is utilized. This, however, does not mean that EM that has mostly been nurtured in North America is faultless. On the contrary, it has a number of shortcomings. This aspect is expressed in the Preamble of the Iguassu Affirmation approved during the WEF Missions Commission's Missiological Consultation held October 10-15, 1999, attended by 160 key Evangelical leaders from 53 nations. Some of the methodologies of mission seem to be based on inadequate exegesis. Others use a few proof texts but do not make an effort to synchronize those emphases with the greater biblical story.²⁵

Since the Lausanne Congress, as Escobar (page 113) has aptly mentioned, EM has taken on a holistic character, among other things. Two radically different kinds of holism seem to exist in tension. The one that emphasizes "a concept of the gospel and Christian commitment, in which the socially transformative dimensions are unavoidable" is represented by the "radical discipleship" advocates, the ones mostly cited by Escobar in his paper (see Anderson, 1988, p. 113). The other group is equally concerned with biblical

²⁴ There is ample biblical and theological support for the opposing view. We do not have space to go into any in-depth argument in this paper.

²⁵ See the Preamble of the Iguassu Affirmation. It says, "Flowing from a commitment to urgent evangelization, these methodologies have shown how our task might be accomplished. However, these insights must be subject to biblical principles and growth in Christlikeness."

holism yet does not automatically interlock it with social activism.²⁶ It was leaders with this theological preference that led the Lausanne Continuation Committee to work on such strategies as “people group theory,” “unreached people,” “adopt a people,” and so on. A movement such as AD 2000 and Beyond was born particularly to meet the urgent need of those whose focus was on the evangelization of the world. Movements such as COMIBAM I and II also seem to have been led with this kind of theological inclination.²⁷

Both of the camps will continue to exist in tension among Evangelicals, while attempts to seek biblical answers for the support of two conflicting positions will proceed well into the new millennium. In the Iguassu Affirmation, however, the weight seems to have slightly tilted toward the latter position. The urgent need for the proclamation of the gospel to the whole world was stated categorically. At the same time, a strong emphasis was placed on the necessity for meeting human needs as a central Christian value. Holism is simply there in the Bible, though not as a prerequisite for evangelism.²⁸

Having said these things, we must go on to mention some of the problems in

EM as a discipline. Only a few basic ones will be cited here. More specific issues will be dealt with under separate headings. The difficulty seems to be evident in at least two ways. First, we mention the claims, which have in fact much truth in them, of critics who argue that EM has been excessively preoccupied with social science for the past several decades, dealing less with theological issues and integrating less with biblical content.²⁹ This preoccupation obviously brings imbalance to the discipline as a whole. For example, the felt need of Western missionaries is cultural adjustment as they move out of their own comfort zone. It is taken for granted that Western missionaries already know how to minister, as most likely they would have had a theological education in a seminary. This may not always be the case for missionaries from the Two-Thirds World. These servants need not only a similar cultural adjustment, but most often the greater need is for a missiology that guides them in how to integrate biblical themes so that greater ministry power will be exhibited.

Furthermore, when missiology is done only by the West, it lacks the global perspective. Greater contributions from the Two-Thirds World must come in the future.

²⁶ There is a whole range of people within this camp, including persons such as David Hesselgrave and Bryant Myers. See Hesselgrave (1999) and Myers (1999). In the book of Acts and the synoptic Gospels, at least the following three things are evident: (1) There were no attempts to systematize between proclamation of the gospel and social action. (2) Holism was taken for granted throughout these books. Even the Great Commissions found in these books presuppose holism. (3) All of the Great Commissions focus on the proclamation of the gospel. To go beyond what the writers of these books try to say is not being faithful to the intention of the original authors. Concerning the Johannine version of the Great Commission, refer to the recent argument between John Stott and David Hesselgrave in *Trinity World Forum*, Spring 1990 and Spring 1991. Hesselgrave seems to be closer to the intention of the original author.

²⁷ This is the conclusion drawn from the *Report on Global Consultation on Worldwide Evangelization* in May 1995 and COMIBAM II in 1997. See also Neff (1999).

²⁸ See the Iguassu Affirmation, especially items 3 and 4 in the Declarations section.

²⁹ See Rommen (1987, 1993) and Netland (1994). These articles all have warnings about an unhealthy relationship with social science. These warnings, however, are not meant to deny the integration itself.

This is required both by the rapid changes taking place as a result of globalization, as well as by a shift of the Evangelical population to the Two-Thirds World. There is an urgent need for the formulation of a “global Evangelical missiology.” The answer does not consist merely of moving further from the West towards the Two-Thirds World, as we find in mission history and general missiology.³⁰

Shift from theory and practice to practical strategy

A gradual shift from theory and practice to more practical strategy has taken place in the last two decades. Concepts such as strategy with “closure” as a presupposition have contributed toward this end. Such visual concepts as the 10/40 window and unreached people groups, combined with modern statistical research methodology, have helped us see the world in black and white in terms of where the greatest needs are. In conjunction with such movements as AD 2000 and Beyond, tremendous strides have been taken in pushing beyond new frontiers, especially in parts of Asia, Central Asia, and North African countries. For the new sending countries such as Korea, Singapore, Japan, and parts of Latin America and Africa, this strategy has helped to guide and dispatch their new missionaries for the past several decades.³¹

The downside dimension of what has happened is that this kind of strategy has shortcomings. First, it is too simplistic in terms of an ongoing missiological guiding principle. For the North American and European based missionary agencies, it provided opportunities for redirecting the missionary force to the unreached peoples in some of the least evangelized areas of the world. Before such redirection, at one time it was estimated that more than 90% of the entire North American/European missionary force was still in the so-called evangelized zone (Winter, 1976, p. 167).

Yet when this strategy of targeting unreached people groups in the 10/40 window was applied by some of the Two-Thirds World countries in an unfiltered and unevaluated form, it had a number of negative effects. The Two-Thirds World countries have dispatched a majority of their new missionaries to the 10/40 window, without weighing other alternative strategies and missiological theories. This was the case in Korea.³² Granted, there may be other causes of attrition, such as lack of training, undeveloped structure, and lack of member care. Still, this deployment strategy may be one of the major causes of unnecessary attrition of missionaries in Korea. It would have been better if some of the more experienced Western missionaries had been redirected to go to the hard fields in the 10/40 window and not the younger mission force from some

³⁰ See Noll (1996). Recently there have been a number of attempts to write a church history that is global. But so far it is the West trying to include the Two-Thirds World. Missiology also has been moving in this direction. Only a few examples will be cited here. See Verstraelen et al. (1995) and Pittman, Habito, & Muck (1996).

³¹ Virtually all of the Korean nationwide missionary conferences have dealt with reaching unreached people in the last decade.

³² The *Korean Mission Handbook 1998-2000* (p. 40), published by Global Missionary Fellowship Press, indicates that roughly 56.5% of Korean missionaries are working in the 10/40 window. This is apparently good news. But this statistic does not show what avoidable attrition the Korean church has suffered. In addition, there is no indication of how many more workers could have been sent out if the church had adopted a more comprehensive deployment strategy.

of the new sending countries, who were less experienced and not well-equipped to tackle some of the difficult tasks of pioneering that needed tremendous sensitivity. Because of this mission strategy, there have been more casualties than were expected, which naturally has brought discouragement to new missionary movements. Furthermore, the strategy seems to have produced a bottleneck effect on some of the new missionary force. For example, in Korea many young people have dedicated themselves for missionary service. Yet when they look at the fields where they might serve, especially in the 10/40 window, there are very few openings. Consequently, many have not been able to take any further steps and have remained in their own countries. This situation might have been prevented if other equally valid strategies of mission had also been consulted.

Reactionary missiology

As we follow the development of the important missiological themes, we cannot help but notice that EM has been a step behind the Ecumenical Movement in terms of dealing with some of the key missiological issues. Only a few examples will be cited here. The trinitarian base of missiology was first discussed in the 1952 Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council. *Missio Dei*, as it was coined at the conference, quickly began to dominate the agenda for ecumenical missiology, changing its meaning many times. It was incorporated into EM first as a part of the biblical basis of mission in the 1970s; still later, David Bosch (1980, 1991) has theologized the same theme in both of his major works. A voice was again raised in the 1999 World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission Missiologi-

cal Consultation to base EM more firmly on a trinitarian foundation.³³

Contextualization is another case in point. While its roots return us to the creation of the theological education fund in the 1958 Ghana IMC conference, contextualization surfaced as a crucial missiological theme in 1972 through the "Ministry in Context" report of the WCC. Evangelicals, for example, held a consultation at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School to debate the same subject as late as 1982. Since then, the subject has dominated the EM agenda for the past two decades, and it is still an item for discussion. Other similar themes include social responsibility in mission, dialogue as a method of doing evangelism, theological issues in the encounter with non-Christian religion, and mission "from six continents to six continents." Evangelical missiologists and the mission community need to take the initiative to discern key missiological and contextual issues in the third millennium, both in the West and in the Two-Thirds World. Then they must creatively missiologize these areas.³⁴

Missiology still largely with a Western perspective

In past eagerness to translate EM into a more academic discipline, there was a tendency toward overdependence on social science, paying only lip service to Scripture. In the future, EM must strive to base its theory not on just a few relevant texts from the Scriptures; rather, EM must be synchronized with the whole of the biblical narrative. This also summarizes one of the commitments in the Iguassu Affirmation.

To meet the felt needs of the Two-Thirds World missionaries, there must be greater breakthroughs than we have seen

³³ See the Declarations and Commitments sections of the Iguassu Affirmation.

³⁴ A think-tank session was held at the Iguassu Missiological Consultation for this purpose.

to this point in EM. Merely being biblically and theologically sound is still not adequate. There must be one more step taken towards the integration of biblical content with missiological principles so that missionaries on the field know how to teach the Bible effectively in cross-cultural situations. For example, the book of Romans must be taught from a cross-cultural perspective. Missiology thus gives us concrete guidance in teaching the biblical text in all contexts.

At the present, except for a select number of countries, the majority of the Two-Thirds World countries seem to send their missionaries to their own region or to different people groups within their own nation. This may be the case with the majority of the African, Latin American, and Indian missionaries, primarily because of the vast cross-cultural spiritual need within each region. Cultural understanding is always vital for situations like these. However, it is less urgent for workers staying within their own region than for Western missionaries going to some of the Two-Thirds World countries. Missionaries from the Two-Thirds World will inevitably have different needs. Future EM will have to deal with these different needs that Two-Thirds World missionaries are facing in their own region. One of these needs is dealing more with how best to transmit biblical content so that it will be contextually appropriate. Another area of concern is prayer in mission. Not much has been written on this subject. Training, partnership, and member care in mission are other areas of need. Fortunately, the WEF Missions Commission has done the lion's share of work in these areas in the past 10 years. For the first time in the history of mission, we now have good mis-

siological literature dealing with some of these themes.

In the final analysis, it is essential that a greater number of missiologists from the Two-Thirds World take the initiative and make their contribution in creating a new and global Evangelical missiology. Only then will EM become truly globalized. The Two-Thirds World mission community is now ready to contribute as a full partner in the task of international mission as we enter the new millennium.

As We Look to the Future

EM is facing another critical period in the history of mission as we enter the new millennium. This is due first to the revolution of the information technology era that is upon us all. Information now flows with astonishing speed to the remotest parts of the world. Information technology is also creating a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty. Yet, to shut ourselves out from the changes that are taking place and go our own way will not bring any better results. The future of EM will depend largely upon how it will meet this challenge, with all of the implications of post-modernity and the pluralistic context of the West and segments of the Two-Thirds World. We may have to drastically reconceptualize a major part of EM, if not its entirety.³⁵

Second, by the end of the 20th century, EM seemed to have lost the vitality it once had some three decades ago. The lack of interest in mission in the Western church and the decline of the Western missionary movement may be the major reasons for this phenomenon. As a result, several observations can be made. EM seems to have lost the direction it once had in the 1970s and '80s. During that period, there

³⁵ This sentiment was voiced by more than one person in the think-tank session at the Iguassu Missiological Consultation.

was a measure of consensus among missiologists about EM. Currently, needs seem to dictate the content of EM. EM resembles somewhat the path that the ecumenical missiologists took in the last half century. For them, the world set the agenda for mission. Unless we come again to the Bible and define what mission is, in the new millennium we will increasingly widen the agenda for mission just as ecumenical missiology did. More conservative Evangelicals of the Two-Thirds World will not agree with this trend.

Third, Patrick Johnstone (1999) has recently written a book entitled *The Church Is Bigger Than You Think*.³⁶ He has brought to our focus the reality of the global church. When the West began its missionary movement, it began with the free volunteer missionary society. With the coming of the global church, the scene has changed drastically. We can no longer do mission without considering the place of the local and world church in mission. There are other reasons why we need to take a serious look at the church in mission. For one, in the West the churches are no longer satisfied with their passive role in doing mission. Also, in the Two-Thirds World, churches play a much more dominant role in mission, especially in countries such as India, Korea, and Japan. Some of the Latin American and African countries are also in this category. In many cases, they do not have elaborate missionary societies to do mission. Instead, the churches send their missionaries by themselves. These and other theological concerns, such as the place of the church in mission, require us to give greater atten-

tion to the existence of the global church in the formulation of EM.³⁷

Fourth, Western Evangelicalism itself has been threatened in the past three decades. In the past, it was largely forces from without that endangered Evangelicalism. The difference is that the recent threats have come from within the "family." One example has to do with the nature of the eternal punishment of God for those who have not heard the gospel proclamation. Some of these issues and discussions could change the face of Evangelicalism in the new millennium to the degree that the line that once divided non-Evangelicals from Evangelicals will no longer exist. We already find this trend in some Evangelical missiological writings. This will widen the chasm between Western and Two-Thirds World mission communities, unless leaders from both of these sectors dialogue and battle to return to the biblical position.

A Final Reflection

In this regard, I suggest that the Iguassu Affirmation can give guidelines as to where Evangelical missiology should go in the new millennium. This document states the focus of mission as the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to every creature in a culturally appropriate manner. But the totality of the declaration gives an unusual balance to the mission given to us by God. Some of the important areas were also mentioned without trying to systematize or unnecessarily lock things in that the Bible does not lock in. While the Iguassu Affirmation does not claim to offer an exhaustive list in our missiology

³⁶ Already in 1977, the Swiss Catholic missiologist, Walbert Bühlmann (1978, p. 131; quoted in Anderson, 1988, p. 114), predicted the coming of the "third church" as "the epoch-making event of current church history."

³⁷ Johannes Blauw (1962) and Charles Van Engen (1991) have done us a great service by their writings. We need to go further. Not only the factors affecting the church of the Two-Thirds World should be brought into focus, but also the church theme should pervade every aspect of our EM.

for Evangelicals, it has the potential to guide the global church as it missiologizes with the required focus and yet without losing other important agenda items for the future. In the process, a true “global Evangelical missiology” could emerge to the benefit of both the West and the Two-Thirds World to the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

References

- Anderson, G. H. (1988, July). American Protestants in pursuit of mission: 1886-1986. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 12(3), pp. 98-102, 104-118.
- Blauw, J. (1962). *The missionary nature of the church: A survey of the biblical theology of mission*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Bosch, D. J. (1980). *Witness to the world: The Christian mission in theological perspective*. Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press.
- . (1991). *Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Bühlmann, W. (1978). *Courage, church! Essays in Ecclesial spirituality*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Coote, R. T. (1982, July). The uneven growth of conservative Evangelical missions. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 6(3), pp. 118-123.
- Ferris, R. W. (Ed.). (1995). *Establishing ministry training: A manual for programme developers*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- Glasser, A. F. (1985, January). The evolution of Evangelical mission theology since World War II. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 9(1), pp. 9-13.
- . (1993). Evangelical missions. In J. M. Phillips (Ed.), *Toward the 21st century in Christian mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Glasser, A. F., & McGavran, D. A. (1983). *Contemporary theologies of mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Harley, D. (1995). *Preparing to serve: Training for cross-cultural mission*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- Hesselgrave, D. J. (1978). *Theology and mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- . (1991). *Communicating Christ cross-culturally: An introduction to missionary communication* (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- . (1999, July). Redefining holism. *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 35, pp. 278-284.
- Johnstone, P. (1999). *The church is bigger than you think: Structures and strategies for the church in the 21st century*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- Kane, J. H. (1976). *Christian missions in biblical perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Kinnamon, M., & Cope, B. E. (1997). *The ecumenical movement: An anthology of key texts and voices*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Lee, Hyun-Mo. (1997, July). The influence of post-modernism on the contemporary theology of mission. *Current Mission Trends* (Korean ed.), No. 10, p. 34.
- Lossky, N., et al. (Eds.). (1991). *Dictionary of the ecumenical movement*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches.
- McGavran, D. A. (1996). Contemporary Evangelical theology of mission. In D. A. Pittman, R. L. F. Habito, & T. C. Muck (Eds.), *Ministry and theology in global perspective: Contemporary challenges for the church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- McQuilkin, J. R. (1993). An Evangelical assessment of mission theology of the kingdom of God. In C. Van Engen, D. S. Gilliland, & P. Pierson (Eds.), *The good news of the kingdom: Mission theology for the third millennium* (pp. 172-178). Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Myers, B. (1999, July). In response: Another look at “holistic mission.” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 35, pp. 285-287.
- Neff, D. (1999, December 6). Market-driven missions? *Christianity Today*, 43(14), p. 28.
- Nelson, M. L. (1976). *The how and why of Third World missions: An Asian case study*. South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- Nelson, M. L. (Ed.). (1976). *Readings in Third World missions: A collection of essential documents*. South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

- Netland, H. A. (1994, Spring). Theology and missions: Some reflections on an ambivalent relationship. *Trinity World Forum*, 19(3), pp. 1-4.
- Noll, M. A. (1996, January). The challenges of contemporary church history, the dilemmas of modern history, and missiology to the rescue. *Missiology*, p. 50.
- Padilla, R. C. (Ed.). (1976). *An international symposium on the Lausanne Covenant*. Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Books.
- Pate, L. D. (1989). *From every people: A handbook of Two-Thirds World missions with directory, history, analysis*. Monrovia, CA: MARC.
- . (1991, April). The changing balance in global mission. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 15(2), pp. 56, 58-61.
- Pittman, D. A., Habito, R. L. F., & Muck, T. C. (Eds.). (1996). *Ministry and theology in global perspective: Contemporary challenges for the church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Rommen, E. (1987, Winter). American missiology: Which way? *Trinity World Forum*, 12(2), pp. 1-3.
- . (1991). *Missiology's place in the academy*. Deerfield, IL: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Also appears in *Trinity World Forum* (1992, Spring), 17(3), pp. 1-4.
- . (1993, Fall). The de-theologizing of missiology. *Trinity World Forum*, 19(1), pp. 1-4.
- Scherer, J. A. (1987). *Gospel, church, and kingdom: Comparative studies in world mission theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press.
- . (1987, October). Missiology as a discipline and what it includes. *Missiology: An International Review*, 15, pp. 507-528.
- . (1999). Key issues to be considered in global mission today: Crucial questions about mission theology, context, and expectations. In P. V. Martinson (Ed.), *Mission at the dawn of the 21st century: A vision for the church* (pp. 10-18). Minneapolis, MN: Kirk House Publishers.
- Scherer, J. A., & Bevans, S. B. (Eds.). (1992). *New directions in mission and evangelization 1: Basic statements, 1974-1991*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- . (1994). *New directions in mission and evangelization 2: Theological foundations*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- . (1999). *New directions in mission and evangelization 3: Faith and culture*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Shenk, W. R. (1996, January). The role of theory in mission studies. *Missiology: An International Review*, 24, pp. 31-45.
- Stafford, T. (1986, February 21). The father of church growth. *Christianity Today*, 30(3), pp. 19-23.
- Stott, J. R. W. (1975). *Christian mission in the modern world*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Taylor, W. D. (Ed.). (1991). *Internationalising missionary training*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- . (1997). *Too valuable to lose: Exploring the causes and cures of missionary attrition*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- Thomas, N. E. (1989, July). From missions to globalization: Teaching missiology in North American seminaries. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 13(3), pp. 103-107.
- Thomas, N. E. (Ed.). (1995). *Classic texts in mission and world Christianity*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Tippett, A. R. (1974). Missiology: A new discipline. In A. Martin (Ed.), *The means of world evangelization: Missiological education at the Fuller School of World Mission*. South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- . (1987). *Introduction to missiology*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- Utuk, E. (1994). From Wheaton to Lausanne. In J. A. Scherer & S. B. Bevans (Eds.), *New directions in mission and evangelization 2: Theological foundations* (pp. 99-112). Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Van Engen, C. E. (1991). *God's missionary people: Rethinking the purpose of the local church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Verkuyt, J. (1978). The history of missiology during the 19th and 20th centuries. In D. Cooper (Ed. and Trans.), *Contemporary missiology: An introduction* (pp. 26-88). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

- Verstraelen, F. J., et al. (Eds.). (1995). *Missiology: An ecumenical introduction: text and contexts of global Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Wagner, C. P. (1986, Spring). Power encounter in Christian mission. *Trinity World Forum*, 11(3), pp. 1-4.
- Warner, T. (1985, Winter). Critical issues for evangelism today. *Trinity World Forum*, 10(2), pp. 1-3.
- Winter, R. D. (1976). The highest priority: Cross-cultural evangelism. In M. L. Nelson (Ed.), *Readings in Third World missions: A collection of essential documents* (pp. 159-170). South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- Wong, J., Pentecost, E., & Larson, P. (1976). Missions from the Third World. In A. F. Glasser, P. G. Hiebert, C. P. Wagner, & R. D. Winter (Eds.), *Crucial dimensions in world evangelization* (pp. 345-396). Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.



David Tai-Woong Lee is the chairman of the WEF Missions Commission. Together with his wife Hun-Bock Lee and their two sons, Young-Min (Sam) and Kyoung-Min (Ben), he resides in Seoul, Korea. He has been actively involved in training Korean missionaries

for the past 14 years as the director of Global Missionary Training Center. He has also served as the chairman of Global Missionary Fellowship, which is one of the largest indigenous interdenominational missionary sending organizations in Korea since its founding in 1987. He has received both M.Div. and D.Miss. degrees from Trinity International University in Deerfield, Illinois. His publications include *Korean Missions: Theory and Practice* (Joy publisher in Korea) and *A Philosophy of Training Disciples* (Hall of Tyrannus, publisher).



10

The Scriptures, the church, and humanity: who should do mission and why?

ANTONIA
LEONORA
VAN DER MEER

I T IS VERY SAD THAT missiology has not yet received its due appreciation from many Evangelical churches and theological colleges. It still seems to be a kind of hobby for those who really like it and for people who perhaps aren't capable of more serious theological discussions or who are unable to be successful in a more normal career. In reality, mission is the main reason the Christian church exists. I believe strongly that the most relevant theological thinking is directly related to mission, and it requires those who engage in it to seek answers in the Scriptures to the pain, questions, and needs of specific people in specific contexts. Mission practice is very important and must flow from serious missiological thinking based on a scriptural perspective. The Scriptures are our model, for the deep theological truths found therein were written in a missionary context, as evidenced in Paul's epistles.

To many of us as Brazilian and Latin American Evangelicals, mission has become a very important issue. We are still very excited in discovering that *we* are called to be involved in mission; that God chooses *us*, enables *us*, and supports *us*; and that he can use *our lives* for his glory and to be a blessing to others. Our calling doesn't mean that we don't have problems or that all churches share this perspective. We are still learning, and we make many mistakes, often with painful consequences for the missionaries and even for the people we want to bless on the mission fields. Some of these mistakes are the fruit of this taste of something new and exciting. For example, missionaries are often sent out with little training and still more often with no missiological training whatsoever. Instruction at a good Bible institute is often considered more than sufficient to go and work with "primi-

tive people.” Just a few years ago, a team of over 100 Brazilian missionaries was sent out. A number of them had no more than two weeks of training. The churches on that specific mission field felt offended. “Do you think we are children?” they asked reproachfully.

Most missionaries do not receive any pastoral care either. The churches generally expect missionaries to be God’s specially chosen and enabled people, some sort of heroes, and they expect great stories of accomplishments. One missionary came back from the field with a medical recommendation for rest, as his health was poor. What did his agency do with him? They said, “All right, you can rest three or four days a week and speak at conferences all over Brazil for only three or four days a week.” Soon the missionary’s health was much worse. Other missionaries have come back depressed by painful experiences on the field, by problems within the team, or by confrontation with war, death, and evil. Nobody even asks if they need any help. People just expect them to be well and to go out on their preaching tours. Some workers are learning to say, “Hey, I’m human. I need some holiday first, and I need medical care.” But it is hard to make demands when you depend on what most of the churches still see as special gifts. When there are other projects (such as a new church building), quite often the first item to be cut from the budget is support for the missionaries.

God, Scripture, and Mission

How does revealed Scripture help us to understand the role of the church in our world of multiple polarizations? I agree wholeheartedly with A. W. Tozer that it is tragic when “in an effort to get the work of the Lord done, we often lose contact with the Lord of the work.” I have seen this happen not just with mission theo-

rists, but even in the lives of missionaries on the field, who then dry out and no longer have a transforming message of hope for others. We can only offer our own poor goodwill or our well or not so well organized good works, which often create dependence and new problems. More important than what we do for God as missionaries is our own continuing relationship with him. He is not the manager of a successful mission business. He is the God who loved us so much that he gave us his only Son. He is our Father.

I believe that God has to be the subject and the object of mission. Mission flows from God—from his nature, his love, and his sovereign rule over the whole universe. If we lose this perspective, we become just another non-governmental organization trying to help people. We may possibly do a lot of good and hard work, but often we tend to be very paternalistic, not seeing the people we want to serve as people of equal value who need respect, understanding, and real partnership as much as or even more than they need any practical service.

I believe that the entire canon is about God’s mission and that it is very clear that God’s purpose has always been to reach and to bless all nations. This is affirmed by the fact that the Bible starts with the creation and fall of humanity as a whole. Then, starting in Genesis 3, there is the promise of restoration of a relationship with God through the seed of the woman. Genesis teaches the unity of the human race—in creation, in being formed in God’s image and likeness, in the fall, and in God’s purpose of redemption (see also Acts 17:26-27). When Abraham was called, he was called to be a blessing to all families on the earth (Gen. 12:3). He was called as a means to achieve God’s end, the salvation of humanity. Sometimes Abraham was a blessing, as when he liberated the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and

prayed for them (Gen. 14:12-24; 18:22-33). At other times he became a stumbling block due to his lack of faith, as when he denied that Sarah was his wife (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-18).

This position of being chosen as an instrument of God's grace to humanity clearly applies to Israel as well (Ex. 19:4-5; Deut. 28:9-10). The Jews knew this, but either they followed the evil ways of the Gentiles, or they developed strong prejudices and barriers against the Gentiles instead of being a blessing to them. When Solomon prayed at the consecration of the temple, he recognized that the temple was not only the house where Israel could meet God, but also the place where God wanted to bless the Gentiles (1 Kings 8:22-53; 2 Chron. 6:12-42).

The Psalms clearly reveal God's purpose to reach and bless all nations. Psalm 96 is a totally and surprisingly missionary psalm, inviting Gentiles to worship God and to "come into his courts" (with no dividing wall). Psalms 2:7-11, 22:27, 68:31, 72:8-19, 86:9, 87:3-7, and many others clearly show that the Gentiles are among the people whom God loves and whose worship he desires to receive. In the prophets, God's love and interest for the nations are evident, as are his judgments on those who commit evil, be they Israelites or Gentiles. Jonah is the story of Israel's resistance against their missionary role and of God's breaking through this resistance to save the Ninevites (who were real and powerful enemies of Israel). Isaiah has many references to God's love for the nations and for all peoples (Isa. 2:2-4; 11:9; 18:7; 19:16-25; 25:6-9). He speaks about the ministry of God's servant in taking light and salvation to the Gentiles (Isa. 42:1-6; 49:6), and he affirms that God will choose his messengers from the Gentile nations as well (Isa. 66:19-23).

During Jesus' life and ministry in Israel, we clearly see that his love was for

all nations and that he was working to break through the disciples' prejudices and to prepare them for a worldwide ministry. He showed special care for Gentiles and Samaritans, and he referred to them frequently and respectfully in his personal contacts, teaching, and parables. Before Jesus left his disciples, his command to reach all the nations was unmistakably clear. The book of Acts shows us how the Holy Spirit came with the specific purpose of enabling the church and individual Christians to witness to all the nations, how he broke through the prejudice that was still present (Acts 1:8; 10; 11; 15), and how he started to incorporate Gentiles into God's kingdom. Acts also shows how God uses ordinary human beings powerfully to accomplish his purposes. The epistles and Revelation are written out of a missionary practice to churches on the "mission field." Thus it can be seen that the whole Bible clearly and consistently reveals the same message.

Christian Response to Human Needs

For many centuries, starting with Constantine and extending through the eras of more modern colonialism (regardless of the continent), there was the idea that Christendom was called to conquer the pagan world. Today there is no longer a "Christian" and a "non-Christian" world. Because of the de-christianization of the West and the multiple migrations of people from many faiths, the West has become very pluralistic, while the church is growing stronger in other regions (also in daily confrontation with other religions).

Another issue is the fact that devotees of other faiths have proven to be more active missionaries than the Christian churches. People from the West have become tired and have lost faith in human-

ism and rationalism. They have started to seek new spiritual answers and truths—as long as all are free to decide for themselves what truth they prefer. Also, more than ever now, the world is divided between the rich and the poor, with the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. Seemingly all-powerful economic forces control the world and are controlled by the rich. For a time, Christianity and Christian mission were identified with the “rich world.” Thank God that the church has grown strong among the poor and that they are becoming a tremendous missionary force. But how are we going to relate our missionary challenge and responsibility to these realities? How can we respond to the tremendous needs and pains of our own time?

David Bosch (1991, pp. 1, 8-11) defines Christian mission this way: “The Christian faith sees ‘all generations of the earth’ as objects of God’s plan of salvation or, in New Testament terms, it regards the ‘reign of God’ which has come in Jesus Christ as intended for all humanity.... Christianity is missionary by its very nature, or it denies its very *raison d’être*. Christian mission gives expression to the dynamic relationship between God and the world ... supremely, in the birth, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth.”

So we reinforce the biblical emphasis on God’s plan of salvation intended for all peoples of all times. God knows and cares for people of each generation and each culture and has great love, understanding, and compassion for them. Paul’s strategy to “become all things to all men” (1 Cor. 9:22) is clearly inspired by the Holy Spirit. If God had not been a missionary God, all of us would have been lost. But God was willing to pay the price to bring about reconciliation with mankind, which includes people of all tribes, tongues,

peoples, and nations, until he comes again.

Bosch (1991) continues, “Foreign mission is not a separate entity; its foundation lies in the universality of salvation and the indivisibility of the reign of Christ. The church has often defined mission in terms of its addressees, not in terms of its nature. *Mission* (*missio Dei*) is God’s self-revelation as the One who loves the world. *Missions* refers to particular forms—related to specific times, places, or needs—of participation in the *missio Dei*.

Today some churches become so “mission minded” that they feel the only valid work is in the 10/40 window. Others refuse to think of foreign countries at all, as long as the work at home (which may be either one’s country or one’s neighborhood) has not yet been finished. We must recover the understanding of *mission* according to its nature. I know serious young people who are willing to give their lives to serve the Lord, yet they have a guilt complex because they haven’t discovered *where* they should go (the problem of the church defining mission according to its addressees).

Bosch (1991) says further, “In our time, God’s yes to the world reveals itself, to a large extent, in the church’s missionary engagement in respect of the realities of injustice, oppression, poverty, discrimination, and violence. Mission includes evangelism as one of its essential dimensions. Evangelism is the proclamation of salvation in Christ to those who do not believe in him, calling to repentance and conversion, announcing forgiveness of sin, and inviting them to become living members of Christ’s earthly community and to begin a life of service to others in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Bosch’s definition is very broad and biblical. It shows that the Christian church can never leave mission as a secondary

item on its agenda, because a truly Christian and biblical church is missionary by its very nature. The whole Bible clearly reveals God's saving love for all humanity, as we have seen. Mission is basically a statement of God's relationship of love with his creatures and an expression of our calling and privilege as his partners and ambassadors. Bosch also maintains a healthy balance between the fundamental importance of evangelism and our service to whole human beings in all aspects of their fallen and suffering humanity. He clearly defines mission as holistic.

As recently as Lausanne I in 1974, through the clear and bold biblical teaching of Latin American theologians like René Padilla and Samuel Escobar, it became evident and was agreed that social action and evangelism are both essential aspects of the church's mission, i.e., that the proclamation of the gospel cannot be separated from concrete manifestations of God's love. Hundreds of Evangelical leaders from all continents signed the Lausanne Covenant, which affirms that God is concerned with justice and reconciliation in the whole of human society and with the liberation of human beings from all sorts of oppression. Further, the message of salvation also includes a message of judgment against all forms of alienation, oppression, and discrimination (Padilla, 1989, p. 4). Since Lausanne, John Stott has expressed this same view in many books, courses, and Bible expositions.

This new emphasis was not accepted quietly by many theologians from the West, and even now a number of them are still writing and preaching to show that mission has to do with saving from sin and not with all aspects of human life. The Lausanne II conference seems to have been an effort to get back to the more traditional vision of proclaiming the simple gospel to all peoples. Perhaps intentionally, Latin Americans were all but absent

among the speakers, with the exception of a few long-term residents in the U.S.—Luis Palau, Carmelo Terranova, and Luis Bush. But theologians from other continents—Caesar Molebatsi from South Africa, Peter Kuzmic from Yugoslavia, and Vinay Samuel from India—clearly continued to present the need for the unity between evangelism and social action (Padilla, 1989, p. 5).

It may be difficult for countries that have evangelized the rest of the world with great effort and high cost—especially a cost in human lives—to accept the fact that their daughter churches have grown up. The mother churches need to stop doing all the teaching and must learn to be real partners. They must trust that the development of more contextualized theologies in other continents does not necessarily mean that these theologies are deviating from the biblical truth.

Mission is the fruit of the love of God, who so loved the world that he gave his only Son in order to redeem human beings from their blindness, oppression, captivity, and poverty, so they can experience a new life of fullness given by his grace. As Evangelical churches, we sin when we are too busy with our Christian activities and with making our Christian systems function smoothly and successfully, while thousands of people groups and billions of people still have no hope or knowledge of the God who loves them and who offers them new life as his beloved children. People need to hear the gospel in a way that they can understand and that it is relevant to their needs. It needs to be something that they can relate to, not something abstract, such as teaching a tribal people about the dichotomy or trichotomy of human nature, when they haven't yet learned how to face witchcraft or how to deal with the fear of evil spirits.

As mentioned above, mission means more than preaching the gospel. It means

caring for whole human beings with God's compassionate love and becoming engaged in the whole context of their lives and suffering. When we look at Jesus' life as our model (John 20:21) and at his call to take up our cross, deny ourselves, and follow him, it becomes very clear that our missionary call is to reach out to people in a holistic way. Jesus spent a lot of time responding to all kinds of human suffering in addition to teaching and preaching. He saw these activities as an integral part of his ministry (Luke 4:16-18). This means that responding in Jesus' way to suffering caused by hunger, economic exploitation, war situations, floods, earthquakes, and droughts also is mission—if we do it as followers of Jesus, because of his love and his calling.

This emphasis was proclaimed in the Curitiba Covenant, which was drawn up in 1976 during the first-ever Latin American missions conference. The conference was attended by more than 500 students from Brazil and other Latin countries, as well as by representatives of mission organizations and churches. The Curitiba Covenant states: "In the past, the call of Jesus Christ and his mission required the crossing of geographical barriers; today the Lord calls us to cross the barriers of inequality, of injustice, and of ideological idolatry. We are called to take the presence of Jesus Christ, proclaiming his redeeming gospel, serving the world and changing it by his love, patient in the hope of a new creation that he will bring, because of which we are groaning" (Covenant, 1978, p. 125).

Until recently, Africa, Asia, and Latin America were always considered mission fields—dark continents dominated by "heathenism and evil practices." The Western churches were the mission-sending churches, because they had a history of many years of Christianity. They also had theologians, books, know-how, and finan-

cial resources. But the churches in these other continents have now grown strong and become mature. More and more, churches have become partners in mission to the whole world, while the mother churches are having to struggle to keep alive in a secular or pluralistic society.

It has been hard for Western churches to allow the development of authentic local Christianity, as this can seem dangerous and open to all sorts of heresies. But living Christianity is always local in its expression, related to human experience in historical categories, with its own cultural colors. A uniform and abstract "universal" expression of the Christian faith which does not become real in a human context does not really exist and does not bring forth any real fruit in changed lives and changed society. Missionary experience must always be marked by an attitude of dialogue, in such a way that the gospel will become relevant and contextualized in each area where it is shared (Steuer-nagel, 1993, p. 21).

If Western churches offer a service to human needs in the poorer countries—a service born out of real Christian love and offered with respect—I believe this service is right and necessary. But when Christians and even missiologists call Africa "the cursed continent," call African culture "demonic," and look down upon our African brothers and sisters, I become very angry. The same is true when European or American missionaries share about their work in Latin America or Asia in a way that is humiliating to the national people, making unhealthy jokes and showing contempt for the lack of hygiene and the inefficiency of the people's habits.

We must understand that poverty, epidemics, and war are not the only great evils of our time. They are very evil indeed, but they often serve to open many hearts and lives to Christ, although this fact certainly cannot be used as a justification to

let injustice and oppression continue to rule. But in the midst of poverty, there are still many human values in Africa, Asia, and Latin America—values of solidarity and amazing generosity and hospitality. (My omission of the Pacific area, about which I know very little, shows my ignorance, not criticism.) At the same time, consumerism and capitalism control our world more and more. They are dominated by evils such as idol-worship of the god Mammon and exclusion of the “have nots,” and they make people more isolated, defensive, competitive, and egotistic. It is more than obvious that excessive wealth and material prosperity in some parts of the world can continue to grow only at the cost of poverty in other regions. In the wealthy West, post-modernism and pluralism make it more difficult to speak about Christ, because it is not politically correct to respect the exclusive claims of Christ. I would say that these Western systems are no less demonic than the evils of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

I faced a lot of extreme poverty and suffering during my ministry in war-torn Angola. I became close to people who had lost most of their family members, who had been raped in very cruel ways, who were hurting inside and outside, and who had very little comfort—no sheets, no soap, very little and poor-quality food, often no medical supplies for broken bones, no relatives to visit them, no hope for the future. Sometimes the situation made me physically ill and unable to sleep. But I knew I had to do my little bit, sharing God’s love with them, praying and reading God’s Word, and listening to their very sad tales. I would take a little soap to one, a towel to another, a bit of oats to a third—like a cup of water in a desert. But the people were willing to listen; they were willing to respond to God’s love.

It was important that they knew that I was willing to listen and that I cared. They

didn’t demand that I solve all their problems. But in response to my caring, many believed—orphan children, young men who had served as soldiers against their will, and women—and their faces would be transformed. A joyful smile would replace the dead stare of hopelessness. Many recovered a deep joy and hope and meaning for their lives when they understood God’s love for them. They understood that they were still able to serve others and were not just social parasites. I know that war is a great evil indeed, but I know that God’s super-abundant grace can manifest itself in each and every context.

There are more recent trends that are also cause for concern, as Alex Araujo (1998, p. 158) states: “In recent years we seem to have shifted our paradigm of how we see ourselves in relation to the world from Christian belief to Christendom, from the call to repentance and a life of faith and obedience to Christ to a concern with the visible, collective, organized Christian presence, a sociological force to be seen and reckoned with by the non-Christian world.... Our popular terminology is that of a clash of religious cultures, and seems excessively preoccupied with great numbers and comparative statistics, with territorial mapping and war room strategies.”

It took the church a long time to free itself from imperialism and worldly powers, first of Constantine, later the Papacy, then the colonial powers. Are we now returning to our original “square one,” leaving behind us once again the model of mission according to Christ, which is characterized by humble service? Are we once again speaking and thinking in terms of warfare, of large numbers and great structures, of the human greatness of our institutions? Is it possible to be successful according to worldly standards and continue to be humble servants of our Lord? Not “great servants of Christ,” but servants

of a great but humble Christ. May God have mercy.

Enabling Local Churches and Christians to Do the Work

As a missionary to Angola and Mozambique, my main ministry was not so much to bring new people into the kingdom, although by God's grace and with great joy I have been involved in that as well. My main ministry was enabling national Christians to do the ministry, and they are doing it much better than I ever could have done. Some examples:

1. I had a young Angolan friend who was a journalist and radio reporter. He was also a staunch Communist. For some months, we had weekly dialogues, with abundant questionings on his part, until he decided to believe and to follow Christ. I then continued to help him along on this new way. About two years after his conversion, the Angolan government opened up politically, in preparation for their first-ever elections. Desiring to become more friendly to the Evangelical churches, they offered a two-hour program free of charge on Sunday mornings on the state radio (there were no other radio stations). This young man became the capable leader of this program, which preached the gospel to millions.

2. A young male nurse suffered a serious spinal injury while he was traveling about, serving the government in fighting sleeping sickness. He was thrown onto the road, where he lay for hours, unable to move, until a truck finally came by and stopped. The occupants, having no knowledge of healthcare, simply heaved the young man onto the back of the truck. After two hours on a bumpy road, he reached a hospital. He suffered intensely, but he became a Christian through our visits. Now he operates a small clinic, and since there was no church in his neigh-

borhood, we started meetings in his backyard. Now 150 people, most of them new converts, are meeting regularly, and they are struggling to build their own church. This man has become an able evangelist from his wheelchair, and many of his family, friends, and patients have become Christians.

3. A young Angolan couple whom I taught at a YWAM course went to serve in a tribe in the mountains, where nobody had ever taken the gospel. They started with a translator and learned the language, and now people are becoming Christians. There is still no Bible translation available, but this isolated Angolan tribe is already sending its own evangelists to neighboring tribes.

4. My sister works in a tribe in the north of Brazil. For more than 15 years, she and some missionary friends had preached and were translating the gospel and serving the community. People were not completely against the message, but very few believed. Then some of the leaders of the community became Christians. One of them wanted to travel around the villages with my sister to help "sow the seed." He had a gift of singing the gospel stories in the people's own traditional way. In about five years, 80% of the Suruí people had become Christians and were active members of the church.

These vignettes show how the national or local Christians often serve much better than foreign missionaries do—and with less training and support. But this does not mean that they don't need any training or teaching. After living for about three years in Angola, I began to discover how deep an influence the people's own traditions still had on them in times of crisis such as serious mental or physical illness, sterility, fear of witchcraft, etc. The people had never learned to face these crises from a biblical point of view. They knew that white people did not agree with their so-

lutions ("because they do not understand our traditional problems"), so they wouldn't talk about the situations with the missionaries. But they had not been offered alternative solutions or relevant biblical teaching. So they went back to their diviners and traditional healers, with their roots, leaves, and spiritual/magical solutions.¹ I did some reading and started to question some young people and mature African Christians. I then prepared a lecture with questions for discussion on the subject. I received dozens of invitations from many churches. Many people came to listen, and it was amazing how open the people became during these discussions. Often they asked, "Why did no one speak to us about these questions before?" They really wanted to learn but had not had the opportunity.

So I see one very important aspect of our missionary endeavor as enabling national Christians to do the work. Some of my missionary friends accepted the challenge to serve some African Independent Churches in Angola and Mozambique. These churches had much syncretism in their religious practices, but their spiritual understanding was limited because they did not have the Bible available in their own language. My friends started teaching them the Bible. Whole churches became Evangelical, and the pastors, elders, and members all wanted to follow the teaching of the Bible according to their new understanding. Often as Evangelicals we tend to reject some groups as heretics. If only we could see them as sinners for whom Jesus died on the cross, just as he did for us! We need to treat all groups as people who have the right to learn and to understand all things that Jesus has commanded us (Matt. 28:20).

Who Should Do Mission?

Mission is entrusted to the church, which is the multi-ethnic body of Christ. The unity of the church is not only a deep theological truth (John 17); it is also a strategic need. Sadly, it is something that is difficult to live out in our daily lives. There is no way that the world will believe our message or see God's glory in us while we are divided and fighting inner wars over small differences in understanding, jealousy, prejudice, a desire for power, and other negative things which Satan rejoices to sow and to see flourish among God's people. These conflicts weaken our witness and strengthen the influence of other religions, sects, and cults, which are as missionary minded as the church of Christ.

I believe that the ultimate goal of mission is to give God the glory due to his wonderful name. This glory is related to the universal spread of the gospel, for the gospel is the light of Christ shining upon all men and overcoming darkness (2 Cor. 4:1-6). In John 17, it is clear that God's name is glorified when Christ offers eternal life to all the people that God has given him. The true unity of the church is based upon and results in the glory of Christ. It convinces sinners powerfully of the truth of our message of hope and love.

Christ clearly revealed that the main goal of the church was to reach all peoples. The Holy Spirit was given for this specific purpose. But there has been a resistant blindness among God's people. It took a long time for the Reformation and Evangelical churches of Europe to understand their missionary responsibility. When they finally went out into the world, they formed daughter churches, but they usually did so without sharing the vision and

¹ African traditional religions will always condemn witchcraft (the use of evil powers to harm others secretly for the witch's benefit), but they see diviners and traditional healers as a way out of the influence of evil powers.

the privilege of being involved in obeying the Great Commission. It took many years for these daughter churches to begin to understand that the responsibility of reaching all nations was theirs as well. Today, we still need to learn to plant missionary-minded churches. It is very encouraging to hear about tribal people in India saving a handful of rice at each meal to raise support for their missionaries. The mission enterprise can start in some simple ways as soon as there is a living community. The important thing is to remain teachable, not to think we have all the answers and the know-how.

I have already mentioned why I believe that African, Latin American, and Asian Third World countries can still be considered mission fields, but at the same time they are developing more and more mission-sending churches. Praise God! It is a great privilege to be a missionary who does not come from a country with a powerful economy, whose country does not represent any threat whatsoever, and who cannot be expected to solve all financial problems that arise. Often, with the best of intentions, mission agencies and missionaries have created a great deal of dependence. But if our home church has difficulty in supporting us as their missionary, and we live a simple lifestyle, people will not put such high economic expectations on us (though in some ways we will continue to reap what others have sown in terms of expectations). Thus, we are freer to serve as partners, as equals, as it was in the beginning when the apostles went out from one of the least significant countries of the Roman Empire.

Sadly, some Brazilian missionaries have begun to relate to people of other Latin American countries or to Africans as if they are now the wise and powerful masters of knowledge, with the right to behave toward others in a condescending way. Human sinfulness, ignorance, and perhaps

wrong lessons learned from some Western missionaries cause this behavior. I believe that the richer countries are more and more in need of missionaries from other continents—missionaries who can show that the gospel is not an old, outdated, and insignificant message, but the greatest and most incredible news anybody could ever tell. It demonstrates that people who feel dry, empty, and tired can overflow with joy and life and make a meaningful contribution.

I was pleased to read that the Wycliffe Bible Translators have come to the conclusion that the only possible way to finish the great task of offering the Word of God to people of all languages is by training more and more local translators. These local translators can do the work better and more rapidly, although they still need foreign missionaries to train them, as well as to serve as consultants until there are more experienced local translators who can take over these roles as well. This is an important strategy, and I hope more mission agencies will follow suit.

Two important prerequisites for the church to reach out in mission are humility and unity. We certainly need to start by humbling ourselves, recognizing our weakness and our sin. In an effort to foster unity in Brazil, we have created a number of Evangelical national associations of mutual cooperation. We have AMTB, an association of mission agencies; APMB, an association of mission teachers; and ACMI, an association of mission departments in churches, alongside the broad Latin American COMIBAM. All of these organizations are serving well. We are learning to support and encourage each other and to listen to each other instead of developing a spirit of competition.

But on the other hand, there are more and more Brazilian denominations and self-sufficient local churches who insist on their own training program and their own

agency and who see no need to work together with others. In some churches, there is such an identification between the values of the church and the values of the global society that churches feel good when they can construct great palaces for worship costing millions of dollars or when they can invite a famous preacher to speak or an expensive gospel group to sing. They feel great, successful, and important. Some pastors live and look more like successful, powerful businessmen or managers. But how can we discover our weakness, guilt, and sin in such a false environment? May God be gracious, and may his Holy Spirit help us to see our true identity. Maybe we are becoming like the church of Laodicea, believing we are rich and prosperous while we are really very poor. Sadly, the poorer churches often try to follow this kind of example and feel less blessed and less spiritual because they don't have the same financial prosperity. But praise God that most missionaries still come from the poorer churches who invest costly gifts in them.

It is encouraging that a growing number of Christian leaders are showing heightened concern to reach other peoples with the gospel. In Angola and Mozambique, most of the churches are still very poor and are struggling to survive, but they recognize that they have something to share with others. They are like the church in Smyrna, to whom Jesus says: "I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich!" (Rev. 2:9). Some of our former students (from seminaries where I used to teach in Angola) are doing a splendid job, taking the gospel to as yet unreached areas. They are training young leaders under extremely difficult conditions and with very little support. One Mozambican pastor walked long distances in one of the provinces that was most affected by the war. In five years he planted 40 churches in unreached villages.

Women missionaries are helping too. I know how difficult it is, at least in Angola and Mozambique, for single women to receive any respect in society. Women are more respected as unmarried mothers than if they remain totally alone. But I praise God for some Angolan and Mozambican sisters who have heard God's call, are serving him wholeheartedly as single women, and by God's grace have the support of their families. I know that Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa have missionary sending and supporting churches. And I trust many more will be added to this number. The same is happening in more and more Latin American countries, as well as in Asia. Praise God!

Why Do Mission?

Mission has existed since the very beginning of the Christian church, and for a few centuries the Evangelical church has been involved. For a long time, mission was motivated not only by the scriptural basis, the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20), but also by more ambiguous convictions, such as those mentioned by Bosch (1991, p. 5): "(a) the absoluteness and superiority of Christian religion when compared with others; (b) the acceptability and adaptability of Christianity to all peoples and conditions; (c) the superior achievements of the Christian mission on the mission fields; (d) the fact that Christianity has shown itself to be stronger than all other religions."

Other motives were theologically more adequate but also ambiguous in their practical manifestations: "(a) the motive of conversion, which emphasizes the value of personal decision and commitment, but tends to narrow the reign of God spiritualistically and individualistically to the sum total of saved souls; (b) the eschatological motive, which fixes people's eyes on the reign of God as a future reality but ... has

no interest in the exigencies of this life; (c) the motive of *plantatio ecclesiae* (church planting), which stresses the need for the gathering of a community of the committed but is inclined to identify the church with the kingdom of God; (d) the philanthropic motive, through which the church is challenged to seek justice in the world but which easily equates God's reign with an improved society" (Bosch, 1991, p. 5).

Bosch shows that often the success of Christian missions became the foundation for mission. Some missiologists of the 19th century trusted in a continuing, growing success of Christian mission, which would have meant that before the end of the 20th century the whole world would have been won for the Christian faith while "heathenism was dying" (Bosch, 1991, p. 6).

Without diminishing the work of our missionary brothers and sisters of the 18th and 19th centuries, we have to recognize that they were very much children of their times, born in a Western world that was very confident of its moral, intellectual, and spiritual superiority. Their ministry was very much marked by these attitudes of superiority, and their success was very strongly tied to the whole colonial enterprise—the spread of Western domination, culture, and technology to other continents. They were so convinced about the baseness and evil of other cultures that most did not take time to try to really understand them. Those who did were criticized by their mission boards because they were spending time learning about heathen religions and cultures, instead of teaching the truth of the gospel and the light of Western culture (Neill, 1979, p. 230).

Today we need to listen to God's Word again. We need to pray and think about our motivation for mission and about the purpose of mission. Our motivation is not primarily to look at the world with com-

passion, though that is a necessary attitude if we follow Christ as our missionary model and are true children of a loving God (1 John 4:7-11). Our main motivations must be our obedience to God and our concern for the glory of God. God who has paid such a precious price for our salvation is Lord of all—a just and merciful Lord who should and shall receive glory through people from every nation, tribe, and tongue coming to worship him. My former Angolan leader, Pastor Octavio Fernando, the General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance of Angola, was angry when he discovered that the main motivation of some Brazilian missionaries was to help the Angolan people. He said: "That is not right. Your main motivation must be your obedience to God." Thank God we can learn such truth from national leaders.

The goal of mission is not only to save individual human beings, but also to establish communities that worship the Lord and have a missionary responsibility. These quality communities will develop with a vision of the values of the kingdom of God and of their responsibility to serve Christ and their fellow human beings in all fields of human action.

Why should we do mission? Because God still loves this world that groans in pain. Because he has a marvelous project for the restoration of the whole of creation, and he wants people to be saved and to have the great privilege of belonging to his international family. Because without this gospel we really are lost, without hope and without God. Because God's grace is so rich and abundantly sufficient to reach any and every sinner—of all generations and cultures. And because of the joy of seeing people who have lost all hope and meaning rediscover life, joy, and a new calling to serve when they hear and understand the gospel. What a great privilege to be called to be involved in such a marvelous and meaningful project! May

God give wisdom and guidance each step of the way to all of us, whatever our nationality, race, mission agency, or denomination.

References

- Araujo, A. (1998). What is our message? *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 34(2), p. 158.
- Bosch, D. J. (1991). *Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Covenant of the missionary conference in Curitiba. (1978). In *Jesus Cristo: Senborio, propósito e missão*. São Paulo, Brazil: ABU Editora.
- Neill, S. (1979). *A history of Christian missions*. Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books.
- Padilla, R. C. (1989). Misión y compromiso social. *Misión* (Buenos Aires), 8(4), pp. 4-5.
- Steuernagel, V. (1993). *Obediência missionária e prática histórica*. São Paulo, Brazil: ABU Editora.



Antonia Leonora (Tonica) van der Meer is Brazilian, daughter of Dutch immigrants. She studied languages and then engaged in student ministry as a staff worker in Brazil. She studied at All Nations Christian College in the U.K. and then worked with IFES to pioneer student work in Angola for 10 years. She served the Evangelical Alliance of Angola

and taught at different seminaries in that nation. She completed her master's degree in theology at the Baptist Theological Faculty in São Paulo. For the last four years, she has been Dean at the Evangelical Center for Missions in Vicosá, Brazil, and is on the board of the Association of Brazilian Mission Teachers.



11

Spiritual warfare and worldview

PAUL
HIEBERT

IN RECENT YEARS, there has been a renewed interest in the gospel as power in the lives of people and in spiritual warfare between God and Satan (Anderson, 1990; Arnold, 1997; Kraft, 1992; Moreau, 1997; Powlison, 1995; Wagner, 1991, to name a few). This comes as an important corrective in many Western churches to the earlier emphasis on the gospel as merely truth and on evil as primarily human weakness. Both truth and power are central themes in the gospel and should be central in the lives of God's people as well.

Much literature on spiritual warfare has been written by missionaries who are forced to question their Western denial of the spirit realities of this world through encounters with witchcraft, spiritism, and demon possession, and who base their studies on experience and look for biblical texts to justify their views. These studies generally lack solid, comprehensive, theological reflection on the subject. A second viewpoint is set forth by biblical scholars who seek to formulate a theological framework for understanding spiritual warfare but who lack a deep understanding of the bewildering array of beliefs in spirit realities found in religions around the world. Consequently, it is hard to apply their findings in the specific contexts in which ministry occurs.

We need a way to build bridges between the biblical teaching and the particularity of different cultures. We hold that Scripture is divine revelation and the source of definitive understandings of truth. We take for granted here that Satan and his hosts are very real and that there is a spiritual battle going on. We also affirm that the battle has already been won and that Christ is establishing his reign on earth through his angels, the church, and his followers.

Doing Theology

How can we reflect theologically on spiritual warfare? Before answering this, we need to clarify what we mean by theology. I am assuming here that Scripture is divine revelation given to us by God, not our human search for God. Theology, then, is our attempt to understand that revelation in our historical and cultural contexts (Figure 1). It is important, therefore, that we study Scripture carefully so that our theologies are biblically informed. We must remember, however, that all our theologies are shaped by the times and cultures in which we live. Even the languages we use are shaped by our worldviews. We must remember, too, that there are great gulfs between biblical times and our times, between universal theories and the particulars of everyday life, and between synchronic theologies

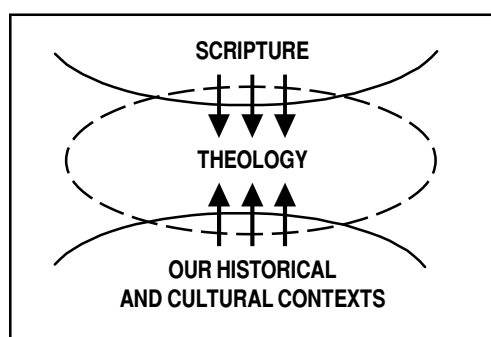


Figure 1
The Nature of Theology

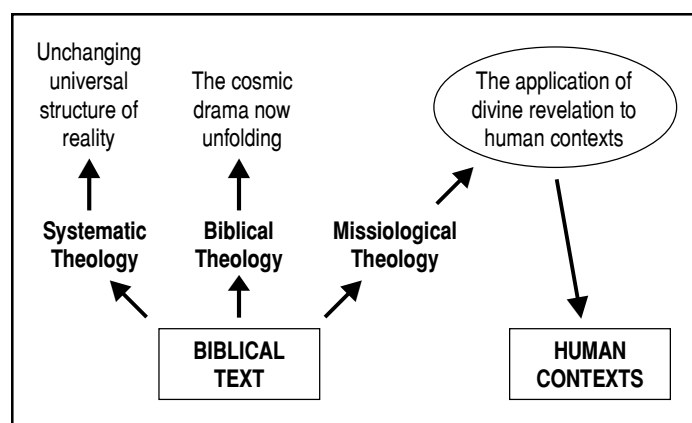


Figure 2: Types of Theology

which examine the unchanging structure of reality and diachronic theologies that study cosmic history. It is important in any theological reflection to work to bridge these differences.

There are several ways to do theology, each of which has its strengths and weaknesses (Figure 2). We will examine some of these types briefly.

Systematic theology

In the West, by theology we traditionally mean systematic theology. This form of theology emerged in the 12th century with the reintroduction of Greek algorithmic logic through the universities of the Middle East and Spain (Finger, 1985, pp. 18-21).¹ At first, systematic theology was seen as the “queen of the science,” but over time it became one discipline among others in theological education—alongside biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, history, missions, and other disciplines (Young, 1998, pp. 78-79). The central question systematic theology seeks to an-

¹ Peter Lombard founded systematic theology when he sought to disengage key theological questions from their original biblical contexts and to arrange them in a logical sequence of their own that would provide a comprehensive, coherent, and synthetically consistent account of all the major issues of Christian faith and that would demonstrate the rational credibility of Christian faith (Finger, 1985, p. 19). Lombard’s *Scntences*, written in the 1140s, provided the form of much of later Medieval and Reformation theology. For an historical summary of its emergence, see Fuller (1997) and Evans, McGrath, & Galloway (1986, particularly pp. 62-173).

	SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY	BIBLICAL THEOLOGY	MISSIOLOGICAL THEOLOGY
SOURCE	The Bible is divine revelation.	The Bible is divine revelation.	The Bible is divine revelation.
KEY QUESTION	What are the eternal, unchanging, cosmic realities?	What is the cosmic story?	What does Scripture say to this particular human situation?
METHOD	Abstract analogical logic	Historiography	Precedent teachings and cases
RESULTS	Helps develop the synchronic understandings of a biblical worldview	Helps develop the diachronic understandings of a biblical worldview	Helps develop missional vision and motivation based on a biblical worldview
LIMITATIONS	Difficulty in bridging from: – structure to story – universal to particular – explanation to mystery Not missiological in nature	Difficulty in bridging from: – story to structure – universal to particular Not missiological in nature	Difficulty in bridging from: – today to cosmic structure – now to cosmic time and story

Figure 3: A Comparison of Evangelical Systematic, Biblical, and Missiological Theologies

swer is, “What are the unchanging universals of reality?” It assumes that there are basic, unchanging realities, and if these are known, we can understand the nature of reality (Figure 3). Systematic theology also assumes that truth is non-historical and non-cultural and that it is true for everyone everywhere. This type of theology uses the algorithmic logic and rhetoric of Greek philosophy, which are propositional in nature, rejecting all internal contradictions and fuzziness in categories and thought.² Its goal is to construct a single systematic understanding of universal truth that is comprehensive, logically consistent, and conceptually coherent. To arrive at objective truth, systematic theology,

like the modern sciences, separates cognition from feelings and values, because the latter are thought to introduce subjectivity into the process.

The strength of systematic theology is its examination of the fundamental categories and structure implicit in Scripture. It gives us a standard against which to judge our own beliefs, and it helps us develop a biblical worldview, both of which are essential for any contemporary reflection on spiritual warfare.

Systematic theology also has its limitations. Because it sees ultimate reality in structural, synchronic terms, it cannot adequately deal with change and the cosmic story revealed in Scripture. Because

² An algorithm is a formal logical process which, if carried out correctly, produces the right answer. Algorithmic logic is sometimes called “machine” logic, because it is the basis upon which calculators and computers work, and calculations can be done faster and more accurately by these instruments than by humans. For an introduction to fuzzy categories and fuzzy logic, see Hiebert (1994, pp. 107-136).

it focuses on universals, it does not tell us how to deal with the particular beliefs and practices found in different cultures.³ Because it seeks to be exhaustive, it leaves little room for mystery in our understanding of reality. Finally, because it is based on precise algorithmic logic, it has little place for wisdom, ambiguity, or paradox.⁴

Systematic theology plays a vital role in helping us develop a biblical worldview, but it has not been the motivating force driving people and churches into missions.

Biblical theology

A second approach to the study of Scripture is biblical theology (see Figure 3). Reacting to the scholasticism of post-Reformation theologians, Johann Gabler advocated a new way of doing theology. He saw theology as a practical science, and he stressed experience, the illumination of the Spirit, and a return to the study of the Bible as text (Evans, McGrath, & Galloway, 1986, pp. 170-171). His central question was, "What did the biblical passages mean at the time to those writing them, and what lessons can we learn from them for today?"

Biblical theology examines the narrative nature of Scripture. It assumes that the heart of revelation is historical in character—that there is a real world with a real history of change over time, which is "go-

ing somewhere" and which has meaning because it has a beginning, it has a plot, and it culminates in God's eternal reign. Biblical theology argues that this view of truth as cosmic story is fundamental to the Hebrew worldview and to an understanding of Scripture.

Biblical theology uses the methods of historiography. It uses the temporal logic of antecedent and consequent causality, and it accepts teleological explanations in which God and humans act on the basis of intentions. Biblical theology is important, because it gives meaning to life by helping us see the cosmic story in which human history and our own biographies are embedded. It helps us understand the cosmic battle between God and Satan—between righteousness and evil.

But biblical theology also has its limits. It focuses on diachronic meaning, leaving the unchanging structure of reality in our peripheral vision. It focuses on past biblical history, not on present events. It also looks at the universal story, not the particular lives of individuals and communities outside the biblical narrative. Consequently, it does not directly offer us applications of biblical truth to the problems we face in specific cultures and persons today. Biblical theology is important because it too helps us develop a biblical worldview, but like systematic theology, it

³ Today non-Western theologians are developing theologies based on other systems of logic. For example, in many African philosophies, meaning is not gained by understanding a logical progression, but by grasping the dynamic relationship of the parts to the whole. Indian philosophies are based on fuzzy sets and fuzzy logic—terms used for precise logic based on non-Cantor sets.

⁴ The discovery of different systems of logic, such as non-Euclidian geometries, non-Cantorian (fuzzy) algebra, and concrete-functional logic, raises the question whether systematic theologies can be constructed on these as well. The problem is not new. Origen and others used allegory, analogy, and other tropological methods in developing their theological frameworks. Tropological methods are essential in studying poetical, wisdom, parabolic, and apocalyptic passages in Scripture. An excessive trust in algorithmic logic also overlooks the fact that all human reasoning is touched by our fallen state and that Paul warns us against putting too much trust in it (1 Cor. 1:20-25).

has not been the motivating force driving people and churches into missions.

Missiological theology

To deal with the contemporary, particular problems we face in missions, we need a third way of doing theology—a way of thinking biblically about our lives here and now.⁵ Martin Kähler wrote almost a century ago that mission is the “mother of theology.” Missionaries, by the very nature of their task, must do theological reflection to make the message of Scripture understood and relevant to people in the particularities of their lives. David Bosch (1991, p. 124) notes, “Paul was the first Christian theologian precisely because he was the first Christian missionary.”

What is missiological theology? Clearly, it draws on systematic and biblical theologies to understand Scripture, but it must build the bridge that brings these truths into the socio-cultural and historical contexts in which the missionary serves (see Figure 3). Its central question is, “What does God’s Word say to humans in this particular situation?” Evangelical mission

theologians affirm that the gospel is universal truth for all. They also recognize that all humans live in different historical and socio-cultural settings and that the gospel must be made known to them in the particularity of these contexts. Eugene Peterson (1997, p. 185) writes: “This is the gospel focus: *you* are the man; *you* are the woman. The gospel is never about everybody else; it is always about you, about me. The gospel is never truth in general; it’s always a truth in specific. The gospel is never a commentary on ideas or culture or conditions; it’s always about actual persons, actual pains, actual troubles, actual sin; you, me; who you are and what you’ve done; who I am and what I’ve done.” The task of the mission theologian is to communicate and apply the gospel to people living today, so that it transforms them and their cultures into what God wants them to be. Missiological theology seeks to bridge the gulf between biblical revelation given millennia ago and human contexts today.⁶

The method of analysis used in missiological theology is to use the biblical

⁵ We can also speak of tropological theology. Tropological theology is done in the context of worship and stresses the mystical, sacramental, and iconic nature of truth. The central question is, “How can we comprehend complex, transcendent truths about God and reality that lie beyond words, logic, and human reason?” Theologies of this nature use tropes such as metaphors, types, myths, parables, and icons to communicate transcendent truth, and they are able to deal with the fuzziness and ambiguities of concrete human life. They use the logic of analogy which recognizes that (1) in some ways two entities, A and B, are alike, (2) in some ways A and B are different (areas in which the analogy does not hold), and (3) there are areas in which it is not clear whether there is a similarity or not. It is this area of uncertainty that generates new insights as the mind explores the power and limits of the analogy.

Tropological theology is doxological. It is not an abstract reflection on the nature of truth for the sake of truth itself. It sees theological reflection as an essential element of worship. Christopher Hall (1998, p. 67) writes, “For the [early church] fathers, the Bible was to be studied, pondered, and exegeted within the context of prayer, worship, reverence, and holiness.” Tropological theology is also tied to the character of the exegete. For example, among the Russian Orthodox, the spiritual leader must be “knowledgeable in the Holy Scriptures, just, capable of teaching his pupils, full of truly unhypocritical love for all, meek, humble, patient, and free from anger and all other passions—greed, vainglory, glutton... (Oleksa, 1987, p. 14). In other words, one cannot trust a brilliant scholar if he or she is arrogant, unfaithful, impatient, or deceitful.

⁶ The process of “critical contextualization” is discussed in more detail in Hiebert (1994, pp. 75-92).

worldview developed through systematic and biblical theologies and to apply the findings through the method of precedent cases, the method used in the British and American legal systems.⁷ For example, in dealing with polygamy, mission theologians examine cases of marriage in the Bible, such as Adam, Abraham, and David, and they draw on the instructions given by Moses and Paul to develop biblical principles of marriage. They then study the contemporary case they are addressing and seek to apply the biblical principles to the situation, taking into account the present context and the many principles that may apply to the case.

Missiological theology involves four steps. The first is *phenomenology*—the study of current ministry cases and biblical parallels to find precedents in Scripture. Mission theologians must seek to understand the cultural context as the people they serve understand it.⁸ They must also examine their own worldviews—the assumptions and logic which they bring with them—to see how these color their analysis. Here the methods developed by the social sciences to exegete human realities can be of help.

The second step in missiological theology is *ontology*—the examination of both the people's and the theologian's understandings of the particular situation in the light of biblical revelation. This is closely tied to the third step, namely, an *evaluation* of the present situation in the light of biblical teachings and a decision on what should be done.

The final step in missiological theology is *missiology*—helping people move

from where they are to where God wants them to be. Missiology recognizes that humans all live in and are shaped by particular cultural and historical contexts, and they can only begin an ongoing process of transformation by starting with their existing systems of thought. We cannot expect people simply to abandon their old ways and adopt new ones. This transformation must also involve whole communities as well as individuals.

Complementarity

Systematic, biblical, and missiological theologies are complementary. Just as an architect makes different blueprints for the same building—structural, electrical, and plumbing—so theologians need to look at reality from different perspectives and through different lenses. We need systematic theology to help us understand the questions, assumptions, categories, and logic found in Scripture regarding the structure of reality. We need biblical theology to help us understand the cosmic story unfolding in Scripture, the “mystery” now revealed to us. We need missiological theology to communicate the transforming gospel into the particular contexts in which humans find themselves.

Human Understandings of Spiritual Warfare

Applying this model of missiological theology to the current debates regarding spiritual warfare, we must begin by examining what the people we serve believe about spirits and spiritual battles. Stories of battles between good and evil and of power encounters between good gods and

⁷ This stands in contrast to the French system of law that examines cases in the light of the Napoleonic Code and not in terms of precedent cases that help to interpret and nuance the application of law in the present setting.

⁸ This is referred to as an “emic” analysis. It stands in contrast to “etic” analysis, which uses the categories and logic of the analyst, which are based on a comparative study of many cultures and societies.

evil demons are found in all religions. In Hinduism, Rama battles Ravana; in Buddhism, Buddha fights Mara; in Islam, Allah wars against Shaitan; and in traditional religions, tribal gods fight one another for conquest. It is not possible here to examine the specific views of spiritual warfare found in the many cultures around the world.⁹ That is the task of each missionary as he/she ministers in specific human contexts. Our task, rather, is to examine our own worldviews to see how these shape our reading of Scripture. If we are not aware of our own worldviews, we are in danger of reading the understandings of war and warfare of our culture into Scripture and of distorting its message. We will briefly examine three worldviews underlying the current debate in the West regarding the nature of spiritual warfare, to see how they have shaped this debate.

Modern supernatural/natural dualism

The worldview of the West has been shaped since the 16th century by the Cartesian dualism that divides the cosmos into two realities—the supernatural world of God, angels, and demons and the natural material world of humans, animals, plants, and matter. This division has led to two views of spiritual warfare. First, as secularism spread, the reality of the supernatural world was denied. In this materialist worldview, the only reality is the natural world, which can best be studied by science. For modern secular people, there is no spiritual warfare because there are no gods, angels, or demons. There is only war in nature between humans, communities, and nations. Some Christians accept this denial of spiritual realities, and they de-

mythologize the Scriptures to make them fit modern secular scientific beliefs. Angels, demons, miracles, and other supernatural realities are explained away in scientific terms. The battle, it is claimed, is between good and evil in human social systems. The church is called to fight against poverty, injustice, oppression, and other evils which are due to oppressive, exploitative human systems of government, business, and religion.

The second view of spiritual warfare emerging out of this dualism is that God, angels, and demons are involved in a cosmic battle in the heavens, but the everyday events on earth are best explained and controlled by science and technology (Figure 4). People pray to God for their salvation, but they turn to modern medicine for healing and to psychology for deliverance from so-called demon possession, because demons, if they exist, exist in the heavens, not on earth. Western missionaries influenced by this dualism deny the realities of witchcraft, spirit possession, evil eye, and magic in the cultures where they serve. Consequently, they fail to provide biblical answers to the people's fears

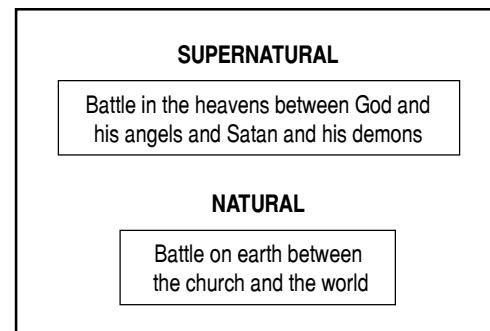


Figure 4
Modern View of Spiritual Warfare

⁹ For example, in a village in India, missionaries must be aware of the battles of the Hindu gods such as Krishna, Rama, and Narasimha. They must also examine the nature and activities of *rakshasas*, *dayams*, *bhutams*, *ammas*, *ghoshams*, and other earth-bound spirit beings that the people believe inhabit the village, which are not a part of formal Hinduism.

of earthly spirits and powers and fail to deal with the reality of Satan's work on earth.

Tribal religions

For most tribal peoples, ancestors, earthly spirits, witchcraft, and magic are very real. The people see the earth and sky as full of beings (gods, earthly divinities, ancestors, ghosts, evil shades, humans, animals, and nature spirits) that relate, deceive, bully, and battle one another for power and personal gain. These beings are neither totally good nor totally evil. They help those who serve or placate them. They harm those who oppose their wishes or who neglect them or refuse to honor them. Humans must placate them to avoid terrible disasters.

Spiritual warfare in animistic societies is seen as an ongoing battle between different alliances of beings (Figure 5). For the most part, these alliances are based on ethnicity and territory. The battle is not primarily between "good" and "evil," but between "us" and "them." The gods, spirits, ancestors, and people of one village or tribe are in constant battle with those of surrounding villages and tribes. When the men of one group defeat those of another, they attribute their success to the power of their gods and spirits. When they are defeated, they blame this on the weak-

ness of their gods and spirits. We see this worldview in the Old Testament in the way the Arameans viewed their battles with the Israelites (1 Kings 20:23-30).

Land plays an important role in tribal views of spiritual warfare. Gods, spirits, and ancestors reside in specific territories or objects and protect their people who reside on their lands. Their powers do not extend to other areas. When people go on distant trips, they are no longer under the protection of their gods. When a community is defeated, the people are expected to change their allegiance to the stronger god and serve him. Conversions to new gods often follow dramatic power encounters.

Some Christians interpret the biblical data on spiritual warfare using the traditional tribal themes of territory and power encounter (Peretti, 1988; Wagner, 1991). Satan is viewed as having authority over the earth—an authority which he exercises through delegation to his demonic hierarchy. As Chuck Lowe (1998) points out, this view of territorial spirits has little biblical justification. The belief in spirits who rule territories and control people implies that these people are hapless victims of the cosmic battles of the gods and that once they are delivered they will be ready to convert to Christ in mass. This sells human sinfulness short. Even if demons are driven out, humans call them back and renew their individual and corporate rebellion against God. Belief in evil spirits now ruling geographic territories also denies the work of the cross. Whatever delegated authority Satan had at the time of creation was taken away after the resurrection, when Christ declared, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). Satan now has no authority over the earth, except the authority given him by his demonic and human followers.

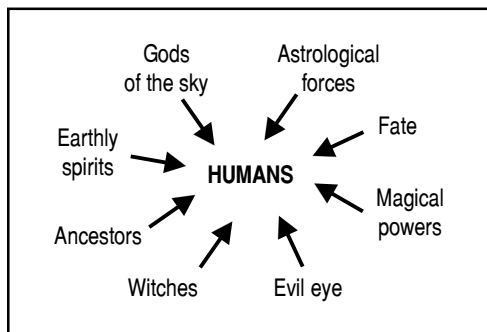


Figure 5
Tribal View of Spiritual Encounters

Cosmic dualism

A third worldview of spiritual warfare is based on a cosmic dualism (Figure 6). This is found in Zoroastrianism, Manicheism, Hinduism, and cultures shaped by the Indo-European worldview, including those in the West. In it, mighty gods battle for control of the universe: one seeking to establish a kingdom of righteousness and order and the other an evil empire. The outcome is uncertain, for both sides are equally strong. Further, the battle is unending, for when either good or evil is defeated, it rises to fight again. All reality is divided into two camps: good gods and bad ones, good nations and evil ones. Ultimately the division is not between cosmic good and evil, for good gods and nations often do evil in order to win the battle, and evil gods and nations do good. The real division is between “our side” and “the enemy.” If we win, we can establish the kingdom, and by definition it will be good. If the others win, they will establish what we see as an evil empire.

Central to this worldview is the myth of redemptive violence. Order can be established only when one side defeats the other in spiritual warfare. In other words, violence is necessary to bring about a better society (Larson, 1974; Lincoln, 1986; Puhvel, 1970; Wink, 1992). To win, therefore, is everything. The focus is on the

battle. The myths tell of the battles between the gods and of their effect on humans. Conflicts and competition are intrinsic to the world and lead to evolution (biology), progress (civilization), development (economics), and prowess (sports).

Morality in the Indo-European battle is based on notions of “fairness” and “equal opportunity,” not on some moral absolutes. To be fair, the conflict must be between those thought to be more or less equal in might. The outcome must be uncertain. It is “unfair” to pit a professional ball team against a team of amateurs. Equal opportunity means that both sides must be able to use the same means to gain victory. If the evil side uses illegal and wicked means, the good side is justified in using them. In movies, the police officer cannot shoot first. When the criminal draws his gun, however, the police officer can shoot him without a trial. In the end, both the good and the bad sides use violence, deceit, and intimidation to win the battle. In this worldview, chaos is the greatest evil, and violence can be used to restore order.

Indo-European religious beliefs have largely died in the West, but as Walter Wink (1992) points out, the Indo-European worldview continues to dominate modern Western thought. It is the basis for the

theories of evolution and capitalism and is the dominant theme in Western entertainment and sports. People pay to see the football battle, and they go home at the end claiming victory or making excuses for the loss. The story ends when the detective unmasks the villain, the cowboys defeat the Indians, Luke Skywalker and Princess Leah thwart the Evil Empire, and Superman destroys the enemies of humankind. Victory in

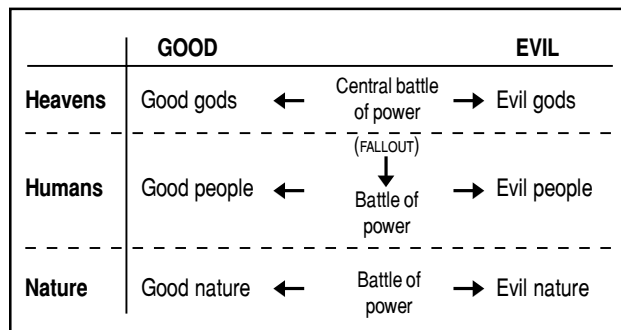


Figure 6
The Myth of Cosmic Dualism

the Indo-European myth is never final, however, nor is evil fully defeated. Every week Bluto grabs Olive Oyl. Every week Popeye tries to rescue her. Every week Bluto beats up Popeye. Every week Popeye gets his spinach and defeats Bluto. Bluto never learns to leave Olive Oyl alone. Popeye never learns to take his spinach before he attacks Bluto. Evil always rises again to challenge the good, so good must constantly be on guard against future attacks.

Many current Christian interpretations of spiritual warfare are based on an Indo-European worldview, which sees such warfare as a cosmic battle between God and his angels and Satan and his demons for the control of people and lands. The battle is fought in the heavens, but it ranges over sky and earth. The central question is one of power: Can God defeat Satan? Because the outcome is in doubt, intense prayer is necessary to enable God and his angels to gain victory over the demonic powers. Humans are victims of this struggle. Even those who turn to Christ are subject to bodily attacks by Satan.

Biblical Views of Spiritual Warfare

Warfare is an important metaphor in Scripture, and we must take it seriously. Eugene Peterson (1997, pp. 122-123) writes: "There is a spiritual war in progress, an all-out moral battle. There is evil and cruelty, unhappiness and illness. There is superstition and ignorance, brutality and pain. God is in continuous and energetic battle against all of it. God is for life and against death. God is for love and against hate. God is for hope and against despair. God is for heaven and against hell. There is no neutral

ground in the universe. Every square foot of space is contested."

The question is, what is the nature of this battle in biblical terms? One thing is clear: the biblical images of spiritual warfare are radically different from those in the materialistic, dualistic, animistic, and Indo-European myths (Figure 7). For example, in the Old Testament the surrounding nations saw Israel's defeats as evidence that their gods were more powerful, but the Old Testament writers are clear—Israel's defeats are not at the hand of pagan gods, but the judgment of Yahweh for their sins (Judg. 4:1-2; 6:1; 10:7; 1 Sam. 28:17-19; 1 Kings 16:2-3; 2 Kings 17:7-23). Similarly, the battle between God and Satan is not one of power (Job 1:1-12; Judg. 9:23-24). The whole world belongs to God. The gods of the pagans are, in fact, no gods. They are merely human-made images fashioned from wood and stone (Isa. 44-46). Satan is a fallen angel created by God.

In the New Testament, the focus shifts to a more spiritual view of battle. The Gospels clearly demonstrate the existence of demons, or unclean spirits, who oppress people. The exorcists of Jesus' day used techniques such as shoving a smelly root up the possessed person's nose to drive the spirit away or invoking a higher

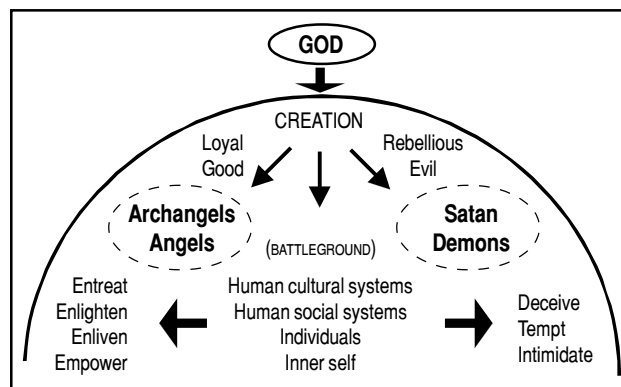


Figure 7
Biblical View of Spiritual Warfare

spirit through magical incantations (Keener, 1993). Jesus, in contrast, simply drove the demons out on the basis of his own authority (Mark 1:21-27; 9:14-29). He was not simply some mighty sorcerer who learned to manipulate the spirits through more powerful magic. He is the sovereign God of the universe exerting his will and authority over Satan and his helpers.

The nature of the battle

The Bible is clear: there is a cosmic battle between God and Satan (Eph. 6:12). There is, however, no doubt about its outcome. The dualism of God and Satan, good and evil, is not eternal and coexistent. In the beginning was God, eternal, righteous, loving, and good. Satan, sin, and sinners appear in creation. Moreover, God's creation is an ongoing process. The very existence of Satan and sinners, and the power they use in their rebellion, is given them by God and is a testimony to his mercy and love. Finally, whatever the battle, it was won at Calvary.

If the cosmic struggle between God and Satan is not one of power, what is it about? It is the establishment of God's reign on earth as it is in heaven. It is for human hearts and godly societies. God in his mercy is inviting sinners to repent and turn to him.

Two parables help us understand the nature of the warfare we face. The first is the parable of the wayward son (Bailey, 1998). The father lavishes his love on his son, but the son rebels and turns against his father. The father is not interested in punishing his son but in winning him back, so the father reaches out in unconditional love. The son wants to provoke the father into hating him, thereby justifying his rebellion, but the father takes all the evil his son heaps on him and continues to love. When the son repents, he is restored back fully into the family (Luke 15:21-24). Similarly, God loves his rebel-

lious creations and longs to save them. If he were to do less, he would be less than perfect love. In this battle for human allegiances, humans are not passive victims. They are active co-conspirators with Satan and his host in rebellion against God, and God urges them to turn to him for salvation.

The second parable concerns the rebellious vassals or stewards (Matt. 21:33-44). At first, the stewards are faithful, and their appointment gives them legitimate authority over part of the kingdom. Later they rebel and persecute the righteous. In Indo-European mythology, the king simply defeats the rebels by might and destroys them. In the biblical worldview, the king first seeks reconciliation, so he sends his servants. When they are mistreated, he sends his son. Even then the king does not remove the rebellious servants arbitrarily. He shows their unfitness to rule by sending his son, who is found guilty and put to death by the servants. The case is appealed to the king, who finds the lower court evil and removes the rebellious servants from power. The central question in Scripture is not power but authority.

The weapons of warfare

Scripture makes it clear that the weapons of spiritual warfare are different for God and for Satan. Satan blinds the minds of humans to the truth through lies and deception. He tempts them with the pleasures of sin by appealing to their old nature. He intimidates them with fear by sending misfortunes. He accuses them of their sins. Above all, he invites them to worship themselves as gods (Gen. 3:1-7; 2 Tim. 3:2). God uses the weapon of truth to enlighten the mind, the weapon of righteousness to combat sin, and the weapon of peace and *shalom* to counter temptation. Above all, he invites all into the kingdom of God, in which Christ reigns in perfect love and justice. Satan and his fol-

lowers (demonic and human) devise cultures and societies of rebellion that blind human minds. They seek to control those who turn themselves over to the rebellion, to keep sinners from converting, and to cause the saved to fall. Human rebellion is both individual and corporate. God and his followers (angelic and human) create the church as a counter-cultural community where Christ is recognized and worshiped as Lord and where truth, love, and righteousness reign. In the battle, God, his angels, and his saints minister to protect and guide his people (2 Kings 6:17; Gen. 24:7; 31:11-12; Dan. 8:15-16; 9:20-23; Matt. 1:20).

Power encounters

At the heart of much of the current debate regarding spiritual warfare is the concept of “power encounter.” Often this is seen in Indo-European terms (Figure 8). Proponents see such encounters as opportunities to demonstrate the might of God through dramatic healings, casting out of demons, and divine protection, and they assume that when people see God’s miraculous interventions, they will believe. Scripture and church history show that demonstrations of God’s power often lead some to believe, but they also excite the enemy to greater opposition, leading to persecution and death. We see this in the book of Acts, where victories are followed

POWER ENCOUNTERS IN ACTS

- Acts 2: Pentecost; power of the Holy Spirit; apostles are ridiculed; some believe.
- Acts 3: Peter heals a crippled man; Peter is put in jail; some believe.
- Acts 5: Ananias and Sapphira die from God’s judgment; great fear seizes the church. (God judges evil in believers and in the church, as well as the evil of Satan.)
- Acts 5: The apostles heal many; they are put in prison.
- Acts 6: Stephen performs signs and wonders; he is killed; persecution spreads.
- Acts 11: Growth of the church; persecution; death of James.
- Acts 13: Paul confronts Elymas; proconsul believes.
- Acts 14: Paul and Barnabas do signs and wonders; some believe; Paul is stoned.
- Acts 16: Paul and Silas cast out a demon; they are beaten and put in jail.
- Acts 17: Paul preaches the gospel; some scoff; others believe.
- Acts 21: Paul preaches and defends himself; he is jailed and sent to Rome.

Figure 9

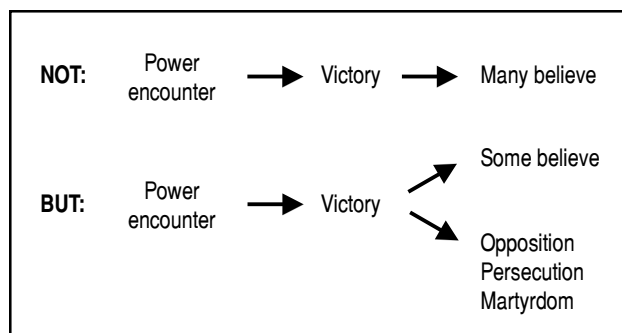


Figure 8
Power Encounters in Scripture

by persecution, imprisonment, and death (Figure 9). Above all, we see this pattern in the Gospel of John, where Jesus confronts the religious and political establishments and is crucified (Figure 10). In biblical spiritual warfare, the cross is the ultimate and final victory (1 Cor. 1:18-25). If our understanding of spiritual warfare cannot explain this, we need to reexamine it. On the cross, Satan used his full might to destroy Christ or to provoke him to use his divinity wrongly. Either would have meant defeat for Christ—the first because Satan would have overcome him

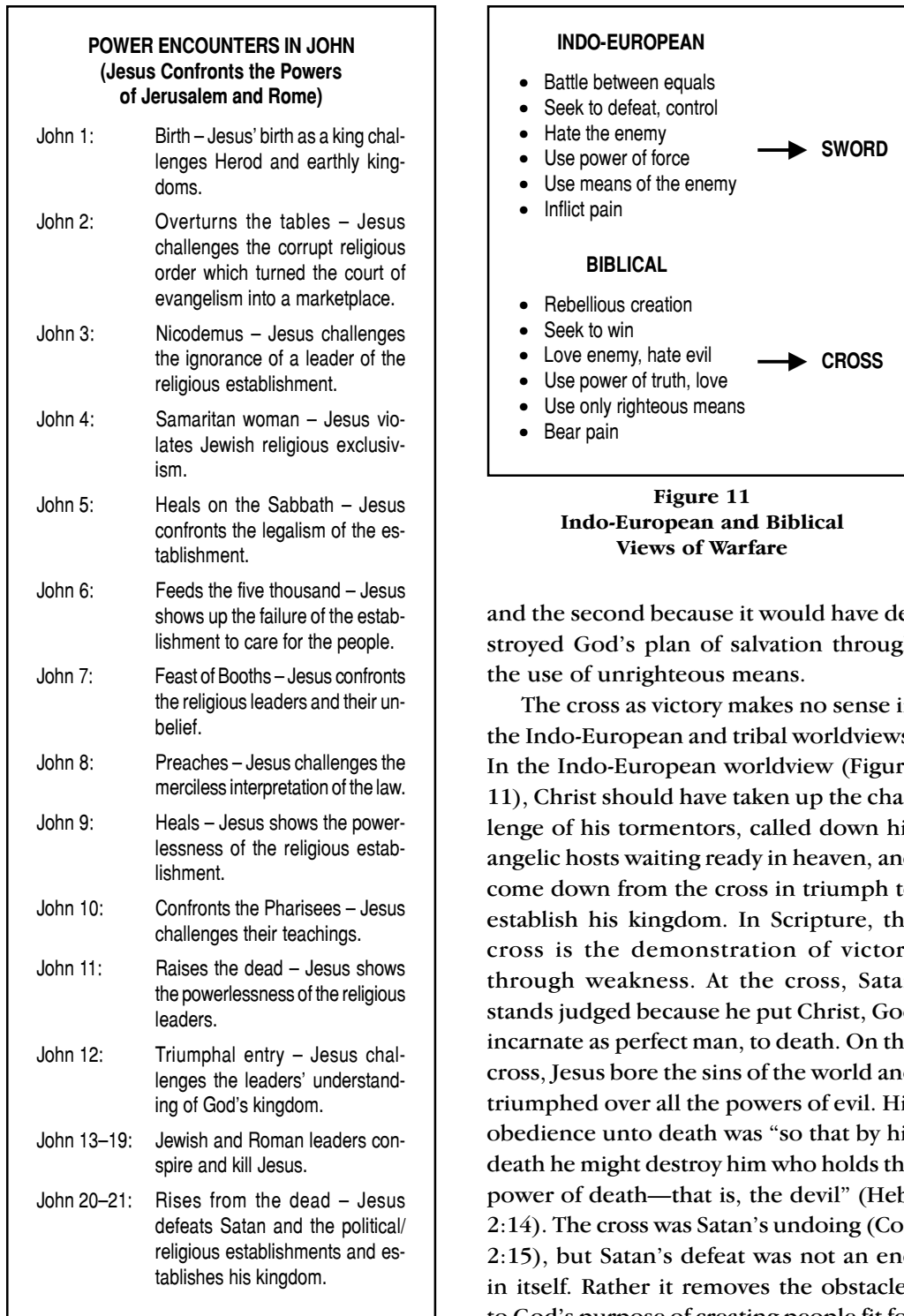


Figure 11
Indo-European and Biblical
Views of Warfare

and the second because it would have destroyed God's plan of salvation through the use of unrighteous means.

The cross as victory makes no sense in the Indo-European and tribal worldviews. In the Indo-European worldview (Figure 11), Christ should have taken up the challenge of his tormentors, called down his angelic hosts waiting ready in heaven, and come down from the cross in triumph to establish his kingdom. In Scripture, the cross is the demonstration of victory through weakness. At the cross, Satan stands judged because he put Christ, God incarnate as perfect man, to death. On the cross, Jesus bore the sins of the world and triumphed over all the powers of evil. His obedience unto death was "so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). The cross was Satan's undoing (Col. 2:15), but Satan's defeat was not an end in itself. Rather it removes the obstacles to God's purpose of creating people fit for his kingdom (Gen. 12:1; Ex. 19:3ff; 1 Peter 2:9). The cross is the victory of righteousness over evil, of love over hate, of

Figure 10

God's way over Satan's way. If our understanding of spiritual warfare does not see the cross as the final triumph, it is wrong.

The biblical heroes in spiritual warfare are given in the hall of fame in Hebrews. Some overthrew kingdoms, escaped death by the sword, put whole armies to flight, and received their loved ones back from death (Heb. 11:33-35). Even greater are the victors who were tortured, mocked, whipped, chained, oppressed, mistreated, and martyred (Heb. 11:36-38). They were "too good for this world." In all these cases, victory lies not in defeating the enemy, but in standing firm in faith and bearing witness to Christ, no matter the outcome.

Christians and churches are in desperate need of showing God's power in transformed lives and in a Christlike confrontation of evil wherever they find it, whether demonic, systemic, or personal. Here we face two dangers. On the one hand, we may avoid bold demonstrations of power for fear these may become magic. The church then is poor in the manifestations of God's might. On the other hand, in our zeal to demonstrate God's power, we can run after the sensational and be tempted to use power for our own glory. Neither miracles nor the cross can be taken out of the gospel without distorting it.

The coming kingdom

Finally, a biblical view of spiritual warfare points to the final establishment of the kingdom of God throughout the whole universe. When we focus too much on the current battle, we lose sight of the cosmic picture in which the real story is not the battle, but the eternal reign of Christ. That vision transformed the early church, and it should be our focus in ministry today.

References

- Anderson, N. T. (1990). *Victory over the darkness: Realizing the power of your identity in Christ*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.
- Arnold, C. E. (1997). *Three crucial questions about spiritual warfare*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Bailey, K. E. (1998, October 26). The pursuing father. *Christianity Today*, 42(12), pp. 33-40.
- Bosch, D. J. (1991). *Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Evans, G. R., McGrath, A. E., & Galloway, A. D. (1986). *The science of theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Finger, T. N. (1985). *Christian theology: An eschatological approach* (Vol. 1). Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.
- Fuller, D. P. (1997). Biblical theology and the analogy of faith. *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 14, pp. 65-74.
- Hall, C. A. (1998, May 18). "Augustine who?" A window on the Greek Christian world. [Book review of *The Bible in Greek Christian antiquity*]. *Christianity Today*, 42(6), pp. 66-67.
- Hiebert, P. G. (1994). *Anthropological reflections on missiological issues*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Kraft, C. H. (1992). *Defeating dark angels: Breaking demonic oppression in the believer's life*. Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books/Servant Publications.
- Larson, G. J. (Ed.). (1974). *Myth in Indo-European antiquity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Lincoln, B. (1986). *Myth, cosmos, and society: Indo-European themes of creation and destruction*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lowe, C. (1998). *Territorial spirits and world evangelization?* Borough Green, Kent, UK: OMF International.
- Moreau, A. S. (1997). *Essentials of spiritual warfare: Equipped to win the battle*. Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers.

- Oleksa, M. (Ed.). (1987). *Alaskan missionary spirituality*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Peretti, F. E. (1988). *This present darkness*. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books.
- Peterson, E. H. (1997). *Leap over a wall: Earthy spirituality for everyday Christians*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Powlison, D. (1995). *Power encounters: Reclaiming spiritual warfare*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Puhvel, J. (Ed.) (1970). *Myth and law among the Indo-Europeans: Indo-European comparative mythology*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Wagner, C. P. (1991). *Engaging the enemy: How to fight and defeat territorial spirits*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.
- Wink, W. (1992). *Engaging the powers: Discernment and resistance in a world of domination*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Young, M. (1998). Theological approaches to some perpetual problems in theological education. *Christian Education Journal*, 2(Spring), pp. 75-87.



Paul Hiebert completed a seminary degree in missions and a doctoral degree in anthropology at the University of Minnesota. He and his wife, Frances, served as missionaries in India with the Mennonite Brethren Church for six years. Paul taught in the

Department of Anthropology at Kansas State University and the University of Washington, Seattle, and in the School of Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He has published many books and articles in missions and anthropology, including *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*; *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*; *Incarnational Ministries* (church planting in tribal, peasant, and urban societies); and *Understanding Folk Religions: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (deals with the problem of split-level Christianity and folk religions: why do many Christians go to church on Sunday and to the diviner and spiritist on Monday?). Paul and Fran are parents of three adult children.



Rethinking trinitarian missiology

ALAN
ROXBURGH

THIS CHAPTER MUST BEGIN with an acknowledgment that locates the writer. In a post-modern world, we must not assume a position that speaks on behalf of all humanity or all Christian understanding in all places. I write from the perspective of a Western, Canadian, North American Christian whose life is shaped by the context and history of this continent. As Miriam Adeney (see chapter 26) pointed out in her paper presented at the 1999 Iguassu Consultation, this description holds within it a way of seeing and responding to the world that is particular and perspectival. It is neither a neutral nor a universal perspective, though the latter has often been assumed in many mission strategies.

The following discussion comes from my particular perspective. The challenge for the church in North America is missional, as the North American church shows little or no ability to engage its own culture with the gospel. Christopher Coker (1998; cited in *Context*, 1999, p. 3) in his book *Twilight of the West* comments: “The two dominant strands that defined the West, gave it animating vigor and a sense of purpose, were religion and Enlightenment exceptionalism. Both are in tatters.” The North American church has to address its own loss of missional identity in this culture. In the words of Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall (1997, p. 1): “... the winding down of a process that was inaugurated in the fourth century ... to the great shift that began to occur in the character of the Christian movement under ... Constantine, there now corresponds a shift of reverse proportions. What was born in that distant century, namely, the imperial church, now comes to an end. That beginning and this ending are the two great social transitions in the course of Christianity in the world.”

Commenting on the current state of Christian meaning in North America, sociologists suggest that the place of the church in American society is changing at a rapid pace. They state that the realities of pluralism and privatism have undermined the old religious and cultural control that the church once enjoyed. Three critical elements now characterize religious life in North America: the erosion of a public faith, the polarization of American life, and the heightened religious individualism of our time (see Roof & McKinney, 1987).

As much as anywhere else, the church on the North American continent is in desperate need of a new missional framework, and it must become anchored deeply in a trinitarian theology if it is to be redeemed from its cultural reductionisms. The embracing of technique, success, and functional models of growth has blinded us to our captivity to modern culture. The North American church has too often designed a reductionistic gospel customized for expressive individualists desiring spiritual life *a la carte* (see Guder, 2000). In the words of Harold Bloom (1992), Christianity in America is far more gnostic than anything else. This brief paper addresses issues confronting mission and suggests ways in which the controlling motif of the Trinity might inform our thinking.

Careful Attention As We Engage the Subject

Mission is the people of God giving witness to the reality of God through the church as the sign, foretaste, and presence of the kingdom. Mission must, therefore, be preoccupied with the nature of the One to whom it witnesses. We must speak of, announce, and witness to the God who is revealed as Father, Son, and Spirit. This revelation is only known in and through

Jesus Christ. The mission of Jesus, the gospel of Jesus Christ, is the mission of the trinitarian God who is at the heart of Jesus' revelation. Therefore, a trinitarian framework must inform our missiology. This is the distinctive nature of Christian proclamation. This trinitarian basis of missiology is not an abstract doctrine, but the essence of the gospel's witness and power. In a globalized, post-modern context, we urgently need to recover the Trinity as the central interpretive framework for missiology.

Missiology in the West now engages a new, pluralist world of cultures as a result of the transformations that reshaped our world in the 20th century. How does the church's encounter with God as Trinity inform and shape this new context? How does the church respond to the questions of authority and knowledge underlying much of the current ferment around the world? Even within the Christian world, pluralism and post-modernism raise significant questions about the nature of Jesus and the exclusive claims of the gospel.

A current best-seller (Borg & Wright, 1999) features debates on the identity of Jesus. What are the most basic convictions from which Christians respond to this question today? Are there ways of engaging such profoundly missional questions that enable us to question the very principles used to deconstruct Christian belief? Will our theologies of mission (which must involve critical questions of how we know something) remain tied to the methodologies of modern foundationalist objectivism, or can we free ourselves from this Western perspective? What are the options in a post-modern context?

These are critical questions for an emerging missiology. They take us back to the trinitarian nature of God. If God is the three-person Trinity revealed in Jesus Christ, then our methodologies and frameworks must articulate and practice a missi-

ology that corresponds with and is derived from the nature of God known only in and through Jesus Christ.

Perspectives for Trinitarian Missiology: Rooted in Confession

Christians begin with confession. In the language of Augustine, we are those who from faith are seeking understanding. This framework results from the encounter of Jesus Christ with the early disciples. It arises from the formation of a disciple community that witnesses to Jesus as the One sent from God in the fullness of time with the good news of salvation. From this point of beginning, the church is compelled to confess that there is no other God of whom we can speak, except the God revealed in Jesus Christ. The early church fathers were compelled to this confession through their encounters with the Gospels. For Christians there is no other way of confessing the reality of God except as Trinity.

The doctrine of the Trinity is not an abstract dogma created by the church out of some social need to convert pagans or to argue with Greek philosophers. The confession of God as Trinity was a response to the love of the Father, the historical reality of Jesus Christ, and the experience of the Holy Spirit. The early Christians were compelled toward this confession by their encounter with Jesus. It is critical to understand that this revelatory compulsion to understand God as Trinity was utterly central to the ability of the early apologists to engage their contexts. Out of this confession, they created a new basis for understanding how we think about reality. As it was with them, so it will need to be for us today. The genius of the early fathers was precisely their recognition of the God whom Jesus revealed to the world.

The Trinity, so clearly central to Christian self-understanding, is crucial for the church's mission in this new millennium. This may seem both an obvious and a strange way to state the case. After all, the Trinity functions like a bedrock conviction that has guided the church from its beginnings. It is at the heart of Evangelical conviction. No one present at the Iguassu Consultation would waver from this tenet of our faith. We are, in doctrine, if perhaps not in practice, Trinitarians. This we believe, and for this conviction we would die. But the obviousness of it all isn't really all that obvious, nor are its critical missiological implications. Perhaps this accounts for the disjunctive way in which we believe, for that belief is neither informing nor shaping our missiology, as it should.

As the differing formulations of Nicea (325 A.D.) and Chalcedon (451 A.D.) reveal, the doctrine of the Trinity was not immediately obvious to the early church. It did not emerge fully shaped; rather, it had to grow and emerge with its own profile and reality, as the early church fathers struggled with a variety of challenges from within their own community concerning the nature of Jesus. It must have been a fascinating, familiar discussion! The Council of Nicea was focused almost entirely on the Christological framework of Christian meaning. The two-person nature of Christ in both the incarnation and the form of God was a huge intellectual battle to be engaged by the early fathers against heresies that reduced the revelation of God into Greek thought categories.

This is an important point to make. One of the crucial struggles in this period was over the basis for knowing—in other words, epistemology. The question of the two natures of Jesus had to be addressed in the context of a Greek framework whose commitment to an unmoved, universal Idea could not tolerate a notion like the incarnation. The debate was, again,

not that of academics abstractly defining the nature of Jesus in a context removed from the missional realities of their setting. It was a vigorous struggle to articulate the meaning of the incarnation in the midst of a potent, pluralist, philosophical and religious culture. It was the categories of this philosophical culture that were coming to be seen as the normative way of interpreting the incarnation from within the church.

Beneath these debates were basic questions about God's nature, the meaning of Christian witness, the nature of the world, and the intention of salvation. A response to the last three was dependent on the first. These were missional debates that have important lessons for us as we engage a post-modern world with the gospel.

By the time of Chalcedon (451 A.D.), the focus of debate had shifted. There is now a far stronger and more extended statement of God's trinitarian nature. What we, quite properly, take to be a non-negotiable foundation of the church was being discerned and unfolded. The church was being compelled to understand the nature of God as trinitarian through its encounter with Jesus Christ and its engagement with the currents of religious and philosophical perspectives. In its encounters with diverse cultural and philosophical perspectives, each claiming the ascendant interpretive position in the world, the church engaged this context by working through the fuller implications of the incarnation for the meaning of God's nature. These men resisted allowing the revelation of Jesus to be placed within the categories of the world of ideas that surrounded them. The key to this process lay in their articulation of God revealed in Jesus as Trinity. What the early fathers accomplished was to articulate a new basis for knowing and interpreting the meaning of the world. The Trinity was

this new basis, and it had profound implications for the communication of the gospel.

This is precisely the challenge with which a missiology for a new millennium is confronted today. The source of our response can be no different from that of the early fathers. There was now a different starting point from which to read the world. This trinitarian starting point was critical for the missional energy that lay behind the expansion of the early church. Lesslie Newbigin (1995, pp. 25-27) has described with great eloquence the worldview against which the early fathers had to struggle: "Within such a worldview there is room for, and in fact necessity for, a whole range of intermediate entities to bridge the gap between the pure being, which is essentially unknowable and unapproachable, and the ordinary world of things and events.... The story of the first three centuries of the Christian era furnishes a rich variety of variations on these themes. What they have in common is that they leave intact the classical thought-world. They leave unhealed its dichotomies. Above all they leave it with a God finally uninvolved in human history ... new way of understanding was embodied in the doctrine of the Trinity ... it became a new way of making sense of the world."

Unfortunately, in many ways, in part resulting from our amnesia about church history, our contemporary missiological encounters in our globalized, post-modern world have lost the powerful trinitarian framing of the early fathers with Scripture and Jesus Christ.

A Focal Basis in the Early Fathers

In the pressing questions that the church must address in a globalized world about how we know anything at all and about the nature of reality, the trinitarian

affirmation is the starting point for a new missiology.

As indicated, the doctrine of the Trinity was something the early church was compelled to confess out of their encounter with Jesus Christ. The church emerged from a Jewish context in which God is One. Further, in the Greek world of the first century, Platonizing influences emphasized the fundamental unity and oneness of all things through an ascending hierarchy of being. It was not natural for the notion of the Trinity to emerge as a readily acceptable category of meaning. But the doctrine was not developed simply as a philosophical argument. It emerged from the church's own encounter with Jesus Christ as its Lord. Christology compels the doctrine of the Trinity on the church.

For the early Christians, Jesus was the hinge around which all of reality was now to be understood and interpreted. Jesus was the basis of both describing reality and explaining how we know. Questions about the fundamental nature of reality, the meaning of human life, the purpose of the world, and how we know anything at all were no longer decided on the basis of speculative theology or philosophy but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. At the heart of that revelation is the communication of God's nature and, therefore, of the nature of reality. If it was the case that God had, finally and completely, been revealed in Jesus (see John 1:1-14, Philippians 2, and 1 John 1), then questions about the meaning of reality and our source of knowledge are determined by this revelation of God's nature. All other explanations and philosophies are relativized. As the doctrine of the Trinity was impressed upon the church, the church came to recognize a fundamentally new basis for knowing that was distinct from that of either the Greek or Hebrew world. The Trinity became the hinge through which to

engage the missional challenges of their time.

Church fathers like Athanasius and the Cappadocians engaged the most creative minds of the ancient world. They were forced to confront the most fundamental questions about the meaning, purpose, and direction of the cosmos. How they responded was critical to the future direction of the gospel. Again, the Trinity was foundational to their mission.

What were the questions that had to be dealt with in these early centuries of the church's life, as the church encountered a sophisticated Greek and Roman world outside the womb of Palestine? There were questions on the nature of being: What actually comprised reality? Where was a notion of God within that worldview? Also, what is the nature of the meaning of the cosmos? Is there really a distinction between the cosmos and the notion of a creator, or are they essentially one and the same?

Trinitarian Missiology in a New Millennium

These questions may sound distant and abstract to us. But they are as alive today as they were in the second and third centuries of the Christian era. From modern developments in physics, biology, and cosmology through to the re-emergence of spiritualities from both the East and the more ancient West, the same questions about the nature of the cosmos and the meaning of God are back on the front page of engagement. A trinitarian missiology is foundational to engaging the cultures of a pluralized, post-modern world.

A new set of challenges also confronts mission, and not only in the West, with the emergence of a post-modern world and the end of an imperial Christianity. We must not simply engage these movements on their own terms. This is what

happened to so much of modern apologetics, as they were reshaped into the categories of modernity. We must approach our world from the new starting point in Jesus Christ. We are a community formed by a particular story and context of worship and life. If we engage our world from this other perspective, we shall find ourselves asking different questions to the pluralized world of post-modernity.

Our starting point is the question of who is the God who has entered into relationship with us through Jesus Christ. Note the meaning of this question. We do not automatically assume that we know the answer. We must not assume that this question has been answered and that we can go directly on to proclaim and deal with Jesus Christ. This would fail to engage the radicality of the revelation of God's nature. If we assume we have worked out the questions of God's nature, we will move quickly to strategic questions of how to bring the message of Jesus into the new post-modern, pluralist context. Most of us in the West are unconsciously shaped by the views of the Enlightenment. (To varying degrees, this includes most of the international Christian scholars who have studied in European or North American educational institutions, whether Christian or secular.) Our understanding of Jesus and of the gospel is deeply entwined with modernity. While we might embrace a personal Jesus, we are also shaped by a world of an abstractionist God, the autonomous self, the disembodied soul, and a created world that is essentially a secondary, non-essential holding place that will pass away. We cannot ask the question of the gospel of Jesus Christ for our time without returning to the prior and more fundamental question about the God who has entered into relationship with us in and through Jesus Christ.

The question of God's nature is foundational to the related questions of how we know anything is true. Newbigin's earlier observations are critical. The early church fathers developed their confession of God as Trinity into a new way of understanding all of reality and the nature of truth. Reality could no longer be understood as a "timeless, passionless monad beyond all human knowing, but as a trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit ... it becomes the basis of a new way of understanding the world" (Newbigin, 1995, p. 26).

What would it mean today for Evangelical missiology to engage this new post-modern context from a similar starting point? How would this starting point inform our theologies of creation and redemption? In what ways would the interpenetrating dynamic of God's relationality affect our notions of the kingdom of God and the eschatological future that has come in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit? Some of the most basic challenges confronting a gospel-shaped encounter with a post-modern world and its diverse cultures emerge as we articulate our own understanding of what it means to know. We cannot afford to engage these issues on a field of discourse already set out by those now writing their post-modern agenda in our newly globalized world. We must recover the fundamental revelation of the trinitarian God in Jesus Christ.

If Christians now know the world through their faith in Jesus Christ, then they also know it as the material world that has been created and is being redeemed by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. Questions about the nature of ultimate reality and human life are at the core of the human quest for meaning around the globe today. They lie at the basis of the massive changes and shifts reframing our period of history. Unless we understand what is at stake in these questions and how to respond to

them as Christians, our missiologies will fail to penetrate in transformative and redeeming ways into the core issues of our time. These are not frustrating, academic, abstract questions that interfere with the “pure” and “simple” gospel. They are the foundations for any faithful engagement of the gospel with the world in which we live.

There is another side to this conviction. While trinitarian confession seems obvious and we are deeply committed to an Evangelical faith in God as three persons, the Trinity is generally relegated to the level of a theological doctrine. It is left to the realm of academic theologians to explain rather than seen as an essential shaper of an Evangelical missiology. For too many of us, the Trinity is a dense, complex, theological conundrum best left to the few who can make sense of its meaning. It’s not that we disbelieve the Trinity. On the contrary, it is an essential confession. But beyond confession, it has little bearing on our missiology except as a concept that needs to be explained and defended. There are reasons for this. Explanations of God’s threeness feel so dense and complex that they escape ordinary Christians.

Operating out of categories that belong more to the Greeks and especially to the Platonists, Evangelicals are often still guided by frameworks in Western thought which hold that the fundamental basis of all reality is monadic—singular in nature and form. This is not simply a Platonic influence. It has remained one of the core beliefs of modernity. Contemporary Evangelicalism was formed in the womb of this modernity. The idea of God as Trinity is, therefore, viewed as one of those difficult conundrums. It doesn’t fit easily into our monadic, singular worldview. How does one explain the three modes of God in ways that make sense within a logic that defines the basis of all being as singular-

ity? This is one of the sticking points in mission to Islamic peoples. That God, first and foremost, is One seems to be the correct, normative way of understanding the basis of reality. This notion of oneness is our starting point. We have been trained to think in a world of universals and objective singularities. The problem is to make a trinitarian understanding fit this perspective of singularity.

In Western culture, the mathematical sense of singularity functions as the dominant metaphor explaining the meaning of God’s oneness. Alongside this is the neo-Platonic philosophy of an ascending order of reality in which all the plurality of the cosmos finds completion in a singular whole. These views influence the frameworks Christians use to think about God. Within these mathematical and Platonic metaphors, it is difficult to reconcile, in any rational manner, the meaning of God as Trinity. Consequently, most Christians begin with an understanding of God as One and then seek alternating images and metaphors to make sense of the three within the oneness.

This becomes such a process of descriptive abstraction that trinitarian thinking is, consequently, left in the realm of the abstract and is perceived to have little practical or functional application for the outworking of ecclesiology or missiology. This illustrates how central Christian convictions get filtered through frameworks that transform their meaning. Missiology must rethink these frameworks through a fresh engagement with the doctrine of the Trinity.

Calling Forth the Trinity in Missiology

The neglect of the Trinity has had profound effects on our missiologies. There are several implications of how this absence of a trinitarian center shapes our

missiologies, making it difficult to see how we might appropriately encounter our world with the gospel.

In the West, mission theology has tended to locate the meaning of reconciliation and salvation within a relatively narrow framework. The locus of God's activity is seen as primarily that of the individual person. It is a prevalent Evangelical view that the central mission God has given to the church is the salvation of individual souls. This perspective moved through Pietism in Europe into contemporary evangelism. It is a retreat from the full sense of community and relationality of God's salvation in Jesus Christ.

Further, following early Platonic re-shaping of Christian understanding, an almost gnostic division has developed in Evangelical thinking and in missiology. This is seen as we juxtapose the existence of a spiritual reality in the world that is essential and eternal over against the physical reality that is secondary and passing. The physical and material are perceived as of relatively small importance in the scheme of salvation and reconciliation. These two forces—the gnostic and the individualistic—are alien to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The gospel's meaning has tended toward a primary focus on the individual, spiritual soul.

This fact suggests the extent to which we have ceased to engage the gospel and, hence, our missiology from the perspective of the Trinity. The Trinity speaks of a quite different understanding of human life from that of the autonomous individual. For God, to be means to be in communion, in relationship. This communion-relationship is the most basic fact about reality, because creation has come from the Trinity. For the creation to be healed, for salvation to come into the world that God so loved, creation must be drawn back into communion across all its systems. All its distinct and separate

agencies and parts (samples of more Newtonian, modern language) are to be drawn into relationship out of their separateness. Relationship is far more than contracts and covenants defining what we do or do not participate in together.

In our own time, the closest image for understanding the communion of God is that of systems theory. Here the rich network of the world and its organisms interpenetrate each other even while having separate identities. So much of the 20th century was an unfolding of these discoveries in physics and biology. We have come to understand the deep levels of connectivity within all creation. Surely this reflects our creator, redeemer, and sustainer God! In the revelation of the Trinity, we are given, as Christian witness, the key to articulating and reflecting the glory of God in the world. A missiology for the new millennium is one that must recognize that creation is not comprised of material things, in the modern sense of *nature*. Human beings are not, fundamentally, unconnected individual *souls*. We are all, human and nonhuman, part of the vast web of life—an interrelated communion. The gospel message must be addressed into this emerging understanding of our globalized world, but we must do this from the basis of our own confession of faith: our encounter with the God of Jesus Christ, who is Trinity. The Western-based church has lived for so many centuries in an abstractionist, objectivist worldview. Now one of our greatest challenges in the years ahead is to discover again a way of thinking that allowed the early church fathers to engage their cultures with the gospel. And this way of thinking was profoundly trinitarian.

The social nature of the Trinity opens for us a perspective of human life radically at odds with the social forms of life and church that emerged in modernity. The ideas of the kingdom of God and the

people of God take on very different social forms when they are read from the perspective of the Trinity. If missiology is about our contextual witness to the revelation of this God in Jesus, then the old Evangelical dichotomies and battles between personal salvation and social action are deconstructed. They are seen for what they actually are—reductionistic expressions of a gospel below the true gospel, that miss the profoundly social nature of the God who enters and redeems all of creation. The biblical imagery of the table, especially at the Last Supper and at the Great Feast in Revelation, underlines this foundational gospel reality.

We must address this unbalanced focus on the individual, spiritual soul as the essence of the gospel's focus. It reflects how we have continued to view fundamental reality through the mathematical categories of singularity. The excessive focus on the singular, the one, is reflected in the way that missions tend to direct their primary focus to the salvation of the discrete, autonomous individual. These comments are not meant to deny the fact that in biblical revelation God is clearly at work in Christ to save and reconcile persons. Persons are incredibly important to God. This is not the dispute. The point is that this perspective, understanding the person in terms of the individual, has become the central locus of our modern gospel. Our missiology reveals our failure to develop a communal missiology from a trinitarian foundation.

This tendency continues to see activities like caring for the social and material needs of others or concern for the state of the earth as secondary elements that aid the primary task of saving individual souls and reconciling individuals to God. This form of modernity Christianity cannot be sustained in the days ahead. It is not simply because the human community is rapidly coming to see the emptiness of this

way of thinking. More importantly, it is so deeply antithetical to the trinitarian God who has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ. If a trinitarian theology of mission is allowed to become the generative center for our conversation, then Evangelical missiology would be helped immensely in these difficult conversations that divide and create suspicions across the global church family.

Drawing to a Close

The Trinity compels us to confess that God is actually made flesh in Jesus the Son. God is involved in history. Therefore, this material and physical and historical world is not just a pale reflection of some universal essence beyond time. It is a part of God's great salvation and eschatological future. Consequently, a whole new vision of the world has been opened before us. It was to such a vision that the historic living and preaching of the gospel drew the poor, the widow, the dying, and the outcast. Salvation was far more than the evacuation of souls from this planet or their escape from hell. The new social reality of God's kingdom and the language of a new creation proclaimed that a new world had begun. So much of our Evangelicalism and its ecclesiologies have managed to turn this all upside down by recreating the very dichotomies the early church was compelled to deny because God is Trinity. The dichotomies between the sensible and intelligible, the material and spiritual, the particular and the relational can be healed with this new vision. The confession of God as Trinity is good news to be heralded in a post-modern world that has increasingly had enough of how these very dichotomies have embedded themselves into the economic, social, and political systems of modernity.

Through the Father and the Son, the creation has been re-established on a

whole new basis. Through the Spirit, human beings are invited to participate in the new creation as sons and daughters through faith in Christ. The relational interpenetration of the cosmos means that through the revelation of the new community, the rest of creation waits, groaning as in the labors of childbirth, for the final revelation of what is promised in Ephesians 1:9-10 for the bringing together again of the whole creation.

Only through the empowering presence of the trinitarian God can the barriers of race, gender, ethnicity, and human/nonhuman in creation break down. And this is happening! It is the Spirit who brings us into this new social reality of the church, the *ecclesia* of Jesus, the Son. As members of this eschatological society, we become the Father's priests in and between the trinitarian God and all the rest of creation. It is this Spirit who now impels the called-out people of God into a broken cosmos to live as incarnated witnesses. By its life as a new society, the church proclaims that the life of the world resides in the love of God the Father, the grace of God made incarnate in Christ the Son, and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. We can only imagine the power of such an incarnational proclamation and lifestyle in cultures and religious systems where the communal/familial/clan structure is natural and all-inclusive. It is no wonder that our personalized and reduced gospel has had such little effect in the world.

This trinitarian missiology becomes a radically missional assertion of faith based upon the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. May God grant us the joy of seeing some of its implications worked out in the true-life situations of our broken world. And all of this is to the glorious praise of our God. Maranatha!

References

- Bloom, H. (1992). *The American religion: The emergence of the post-Christian nation*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Borg, M. J., & Wright, N. T. (1999). *The meaning of Jesus: Two visions*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Coker, C. (1998). *Twilight of the West*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Context. (1999, February 15). (Available from Claretian Publications, 205 West Monroe Street, Chicago, IL 60606).
- Guder, D. (2000). *The continuing conversion of the church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Hall, D. J. (1997). *The end of Christendom and the future of Christianity*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity International Press.
- Newbigin, L. (1995). *The open secret: An introduction to the theology of mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Roof, W. C., & McKinney, W. (1987). *American mainline religion: Its changing shape and future*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.



Alan Roxburgh was born and grew up in Liverpool, England. He emigrated to Canada as a young man, where he now lives in Vancouver with his wife, Jane. They have three grown children. Alan has earned graduate degrees from the Toronto School of Theology, McMaster Divinity College, and Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is ordained Baptist and has pastored and planted churches in Canada. He has taught full time in seminary and directed an urban training program. Alan is a Co-ordinator of the Gospel and Our Culture Network and a member of the writing team which produced *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. He has authored three other books dealing with the mission of the church in North America. Alan currently works as a consultant with the Precept Group in Costa Mesa, California.



Part 3

Grounding our reflections in Scripture: biblical trinitarianism and mission

AS FURTHER DEVELOPED elsewhere in this book, trinitarian missiology has at least a triple focus. Perhaps the best known alternative is the exegetical, theological, and missiological study that identifies the specific role in mission played by each Person of the Trinity. Each member has a distinct and yet overlapping role in creating, revealing, and redeeming.

A second dimension looks at the Trinity in the context of community. The Trinity is our primal first community, an eternal one, self-revealing in creation, history, and the life of the church. In this light, new questions would emerge. For example, what is the communal role of the Trinity in creating, revealing, redeeming, and building communities of faith? In what ways do the three Persons operate together and not separately? What does it mean that each member of the Three in One cedes to, honours, and enhances the others, releasing each other to his specific role in divine realities?

The missiological implications of this second approach challenge much of current church life and mission. In what ways has our Christian concept of community come primarily from pragmatic human organizational models? In what way would this trinitarian communal model impact our pre-



sentation and living out of the gospel, with the epic Story centered in the shared values of divine community?

The invitation to Fernando was to present his exegetical work in a way that identifies the unique contribution of Father, Son, and Spirit to mission, and then the church as the trinitarian community. We therefore experienced the result of careful exegesis over 11 months of study, presented by a colleague from the Two-Thirds World, inviting us into his personal study, and pointing us in the direction of further understanding and application. Fernando's study of God was rooted in the Pauline corpus; that of Christ in the Gospels and Epistles; the Holy Spirit material came primarily from the Epistles but also dipped into the Gospels and Acts; the church study was rooted in the teaching of Jesus and Paul.

But additional themes emerged from Fernando's foundational messages: servanthood, suffering, martyrdom, and holiness. These concerns resonated with convicting power, and they shaped the Consultation participants through the empowering presence of the Spirit.



13

**God:
the source,
the
originator,
and the end
of mission**

DURING THE 20TH CENTURY, there have been many different emphases in the church's attempt to define its mission. Usually each emphasis has focussed on some important aspects of the calling of the church, and often other important aspects have been neglected as a result. If we were to look at mission from a trinitarian basis, many of the pitfalls of these earlier formulations on mission could be avoided. A trinitarian viewpoint helps us to capture some of the richness of the nature of the Godhead. Through that, we can see some of the richness of the way God works through the church. The last study in this series will present the church as the mirror of the Trinity.

The Approach Adopted in These Studies

These studies began out of a concern for the churches in nations like Sri Lanka, where there has been significant growth through the conversion of non-Christians but where the quality of the Christian life among the converts leaves much to be desired. We are seeing serious integrity problems and frequent divisions that give evidence of much that is lacking in our churches. I have been asking the question whether there is something that is lacking in our preaching and teaching that may be contributing to the lack of growth in godliness among our people. The invitation to give four Bible studies on a biblical trinitarianism and mission at the WEF Missiological Consultation afforded me with a good opportunity to pursue this question.

Over a period of about 11 months, I went through all of Paul's Epistles and listed what he taught on God the Father, on some aspects of the life and work of Jesus, on the Holy Spirit, on the church, and on godly living. Thereafter I subdivided these references (except those on godliness, which

AJITH
FERNANDO

will be done at a later time) according to topics and subtopics. I ended up with about 2,975 entries covering 72 topics and 431 subtopics. The present four Bible studies will glean some of the fruit of that study of Paul's Epistles. It would help the reader to know that Paul's Epistles cover a total of 2,005 verses.

The aim of my study was to look for trends and emphases in Paul's writings. The statistics were compiled to look for the recurrence of themes. My assumption was that if a theme recurs many times, it could be important to Paul. This is not, of course, an infallible guide to levels of importance of the themes covered. But such a study does, I believe, have some limited value, in helping us get a feel of what Paul thought about God and what he wanted the church to think about God.

So our purpose is not to develop accurate statistics of the occurrence of themes. In fact, this is not a systematic study of Paul's theology. I wanted to see trends and emphases by looking at the frequency of their occurrence. The figures given in these studies are based on my reading and observation. They are obviously fallible, because I may have missed some references to a topic and even perhaps missed some topics too. Sometimes, as in this study, I have gone beyond Paul's Epistles as was considered significant for the particular study. These studies may lack the enrichment that comes from frequent references to other missiological works. But they have the advantage of discovering missiological emphases directly from Scripture, without being coloured by the opinions of what others regard as being important emphases.

God as Source, Originator, and End

When we think of God the Father and mission, the theme that emerges is that

he is the source, the originator, and the end of all things, including mission. His will determines the creation of the world, the revelation of truth to humanity, the nature of the gospel, the course of history, and the election of individuals to salvation. He prescribes the way in which saved individuals are to live. It is he who in love initiates a relationship with us and comes after us wooing us until we respond to him. He will wrap up history so that in the end he will be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). In this study, we examine how God is presented in the evangelism and teaching of the early church, and we explore the implication of that to the church today.

Acts: God in the Evangelism of the Early Church

To look at the way God is presented in the evangelism of the church, we will need to go to the book of Acts.

Attraction through power

The first thing we see is that a primary means used to attract people to the gospel was the power of God.

- In Acts 2, God sends the Spirit to give the disciples miraculous utterance and to arouse the people's attention, resulting in the preaching of the gospel.
- In chapter 3, God heals a lame man with the same result.
- In chapter 4, the praying church is comforted (just after evangelism has been outlawed) by the shaking of the place where they were gathered.
- In chapter 5, God strikes Ananias and Sapphira down, and fear of God spreads within and without the church.
- In chapter 6, God gives Stephen the power to perform mighty miracles and thus opens the door for his eloquent apologetic ministry.

- In chapter 7, Stephen is given a vision of the exalted Lord as he faces death by stoning.
- In chapter 8, the Samaritans are open to the gospel through Philip's ministry in the miraculous.
- In chapter 9, through a vision, God arrests the man who was on his way to Damascus to arrest Christian believers.
- In chapter 10, God opens the door to Gentile evangelism through visions to Cornelius the Gentile and Peter the apostle to the Jews.
- In chapter 11, the occurrence of the miraculous phenomena of the Holy Spirit in Cornelius' home is presented as evidence that God has granted salvation to Gentiles.
- In chapter 12, God gives comfort and strength to the church through Peter's miraculous escape from prison and the miraculous judgement resulting in Herod's death.
- In chapter 13, the sorcerer Elymas is struck blind, and when the proconsul Sergius Paulus "saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord" (v. 12).
- In chapter 14, the people of Lystra pay attention to the message after a lame man walks for the first time in his life.

These examples show that an important, God-appointed way to arouse people is to give them a demonstration of God's power. And this has been a most effective means of arresting unreached people in the exciting growth of the church in the second half of the 20th century. Fear is a dominant emotion determining the actions of people in both poorer and richer countries. The poor live in terror of poverty and demonic forces. The rich live in terror of economic reversals and the harsh

realities of the hostile business environment that has evolved, with its fierce competition and lack of commitment to the welfare of individuals. To both the rich and the poor, then, the power of God is a vitally relevant truth to drive home.

Previously the Evangelical Movement, possibly influenced by the rational bent of the modern era, focussed so much on the content of the gospel in terms of the atoning work of Christ that it may have ignored this aspect of the power of the gospel. This was clearly an inadequate presentation of the gospel. When the Charismatic Movement burst into the scene in the 20th century, that situation changed quite dramatically.

The evangelistic message

When we look at the evangelistic preaching of the early church, however, another picture of God emerges. What we see is a God who is fuller and greater than one who simply responds to individual situations with a display of power. Interestingly, there isn't much about God's love—though that figures a lot in our preaching. The fuller picture of God is a persistent theme in the Epistles, and I believe that we can use it in evangelism, as it is an essential feature of the gospel and as it is (like miracles) an effective means of winning the attention of unbelievers.

The fuller picture of God emerges especially in the emphasis on the sovereignty of God in the speeches of Acts. God's sovereignty over history recurs often in these speeches. Special attention is given to proclaiming God's sovereignty in the death of Christ and in the raising of Christ from the dead. Five purely evangelistic speeches in Acts are given to Jews and God-fearers.¹ Of these five, four contain references to

¹ Two were given in Jerusalem (Acts 2 and 3), one in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13), and one each to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8) and those assembled at Cornelius' house (Acts 10). We are not including the legal defences of Paul and Stephen here.

the fact that the death of Christ was a fulfilment of God's purpose or of prophecy (2:23; 3:18; 8:32-35; 13:27, 29). Four of these and the only full message to a purely Gentile audience (in Athens) mention that God raised Jesus from the dead (2:24; 3:15; 10:40; 17:31). Three times it is stated that the resurrection or reign of Christ was predicted in prophecy (2:25-31; 3:21-26; 13:32-37).

God's sovereignty in Israel's history is presented twice when Jews are being addressed (3:22-25; 13:14-42). In both messages to Gentile audiences (in Lystra and Athens), God is presented as the sovereign creator and Lord of the universe and of history (14:15-17; 17:24-27). The coming judgement by God or Christ is also proclaimed in five of the seven evangelistic messages of Acts (2:40; 3:23; 10:42; 13:40-41; 17:31).

The sovereignty of God is presented in various other ways too: for example, in the election of Jesus (2:34), the appointing and sending of Jesus (3:20, 26), and the call to audiences to repent, which appears in four talks (2:38; 3:19, 26; 14:15; 17:30). The last of these references is an all-inclusive command to "all people everywhere to repent" (17:30). In his two evangelistic talks to purely Gentile audiences, Paul attempts to give a full introduction to who God is (14:15-17; 17:23-31).

All these references show that though the thing that attracted people to listen to the message was the demonstration of power in a personal and individual way, when the apostles proclaimed the gospel they gave a much fuller picture of who God is. When I was working on a commentary of Acts a few years ago, one of

the things that struck me forcefully was the fact that in Acts the three great miracle workers—Peter, Stephen, and Paul—were also great apologists. Though they performed many miracles, their message was primarily not about miracles. It was about the enduring truths of God and the gospel. It is very rarely that we see this combination in today's evangelism, where the emphasis is often on the temporal blessings which God gives us.

God in the Teaching of Paul's Epistles

We will turn to Paul's Epistles to see how God is presented in the teaching of the early church. My study of God in Paul's Epistles dealt with about 600 references to God,² which yielded almost 1,000 entries in my topical listing. Here I took into consideration all the references to "God" or to the "Father," and other references that clearly imply that the Father was being referred to. A limitation of such a study is that I may have left out some references to God which may not specifically mention God. The huge picture of God that emerges from Paul's references to him is that of his greatness. Let's look at some of the statistics I found:

He is sovereign

There are nine references to God as living and eternal, covering 11 verses. Seven references covering nine verses present him as the only God. 3/4³ state that he is the ultimate reality. In 3/3 he is said to be beyond our comprehension. 15/19 refer to God as the creator, sustainer, and end of creation. 15/20 affirm that God is sovereign over history, and this truth implies some other truths.

² Leon Morris (1986, p. 25) puts the figure at 548 in Paul, out of 1,314 references to God in the New Testament.

³ In these studies, the figures like 3/4 present first the number of references to a theme (three here) and secondly the number of verses covered by those references (four here).

He is glorious

The glory of God is a very important theme, appearing 65 times covering 87 verses. 45/60 of these state that God deserves to be praised, glorified, and/or thanked. 8/10 state that the honour of his name must be shared and upheld and will be upheld in the end.

He is righteous

The wrath and/or judgement of God is another major theme, appearing 67 times and covering 86 verses. Paul also has 28 references to the righteousness of God covering 29 verses.

He is the source of revelation and salvation

There is a pronounced emphasis on God being the originator and source of revelation and the gospel (77/92). Of these, in 20/22 the gospel is the wisdom, mystery, or word of God. In 28/33 God is the cause of the gospel events, which encompass Christ's life and work. In 13/13 the gospel and salvation work through God's power. In 8/10 God is the one who acts to bring people to himself.

Salvation is God's gift

Not only is God the source of salvation; salvation is his gift (116/137). Of these, in 4/5 God is described as our Saviour. 5/6 speak of God's patience and forbearance. 33/40 deal with the election and call of God to salvation. 11/14 state that salvation is a result of mercy. In 23/26 salvation is a result of grace. In 5/6 salvation is a result of love or kindness. In 16/19 God imputes righteousness and justifies us. In 8/9 as a result of salvation, we are accepted by God and have peace with him.

God has a will for our lives

Often Paul says that, as the sovereign God, God has a will for our lives (31/33). Yet when we think of God's will, we usu-

ally think of it for things like daily guidance and decisions we have to make. These are indeed important aspects of his will. But such references are very few in Paul, and usually they have to do with submission to the will of God. Twice Paul refers to his submitting his desire to come to Rome to God's will on the matter (Rom. 1:10; 15:32). Three times he refers to the need to submit to God's will for the individual regarding marriage and singleness (1 Cor. 7:7, 17, 24). Eleven times he refers to his call to ministry. The remaining 15 references have to do with God's will for our salvation, holiness, and spiritual life.

Under a separate heading, I listed all the texts which talk of the way God gives us gifts and the ability to minister through the Holy Spirit (43/49). These references are not relevant to this study on God the Father.

God's post-salvation blessings to us

Paul mentions many blessings which are available to Christians apart from the basic blessing of salvation. This is a major theme in Paul with at least 266 references covering 305 verses, that is, over 15% of the verses in Paul. Here, of course, is an area in keeping with today's preaching and teaching. Yet the particular blessings mentioned may be different from those we usually mention in our preaching. In other words, there may be a difference in emphasis between Paul's treatment of God's post-salvation blessings and ours. Here are some statistics:

There are 10/14 on our great riches in Christ. Of these references, eight are about spiritual riches, while two are on earthly riches. But of these two, one is about the need for the rich to be generous (1 Tim. 6:17), and the other one is about God's supplying Paul's needs while Paul is in prison (Phil. 4:19).

The theme of God's love, grace, mercy, and peace in daily life appears often (31/33). Of these, 1/1 concerns healing (Phil. 2:27), 1/1 deals with the ministry we have been given because of God's mercy (2 Cor. 4:1), and 1/2 is a long list of things that cannot separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38-39). The rest are general references to these blessings being given to us.

Paul refers to the fact that God is committed to our welfare (7/8). Five of these describe God's commitment to us amidst difficulty (Rom. 8:28, 31, 32, 33; Phil. 1:28). The other two refer more to our salvation than to the life that follows (Rom. 9:25-26; 11:28). The fact that God is our Father and we are his children is a common theme (23/26). So is the truth that we are God's people who belong to him (14/27). Nine times Paul says that God is with us (9/9).

God's provision for daily life together with his strength and comfort is another common theme (34/47). Almost all the references are to strength to live the Christian life, i.e., the power to be godly. Exceptions are two references to rescue from trouble, two to comfort in trouble, and three to the strength we have through God's armour for spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10, 11, 13). I did not find many references to spiritual warfare, as it is spoken of today. Paul does talk of the gospel coming with power, which implies spiritual warfare (Rom. 5:19; 1 Thess. 1:5). 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, which talks of the breaking down of strongholds, seems to refer more to an intellectual battle rather than what is today typically referred to as spiritual warfare. I may have missed something here, but I do not think this is a key theme in the Epistles. Acts, of course, has many descriptions about the way spiritual warfare as it is understood today was used in evangelism.

Paul speaks of God revealing truth personally to individuals (10/9). But each time it is a spiritual revelation that will help edify us and bring us closer to God and to knowing and doing his will. (1 Corinthians 12 and 14 refer to this often. But in this study I have included only the verses where God is specifically mentioned.)

It is thrilling to read four times that God praises or commends us. Eschatological blessings are also mentioned (20/25). Another of God's blessings is the giving of the Holy Spirit to us (10/12). We will cover this area in our third study.

We can see that many of the blessings that are emphasised in today's proclamation are either missing or not given much prominence in Paul.

Our response to God

I found 236 recommended responses to God covering 270 verses in Paul's Epistles. That represents 13.5% of the verses in the Epistles.

Belief in God

Belief is our basic response to God (47/57), and that is described in various ways: 20/27 are on believing God or on not trusting in works or idols. 5/5 deal with hoping in God. 1/1 is about seeking God. 3/7 are on confidence before God. 4/5 speak of loving God. 7/5 refer to knowing God. 3/2 are on relying on God during troubles. 4/5 address fear and reverence before God.

Worship (54/66)

If belief is the basic response to God, possibly the noblest response is worship. And Paul describes worship in different ways: 5/7 are about worshiping God, 14/17 are on praying to God, 2/2 are on rejoicing in God, and 33/40 are on thanking and praise to God.

Commitment and obedience (66/75)

Not only do we worship God; we commit ourselves totally to him and seek to please him in all we do. 10/10 deal with honouring God or living lives that are worthy of him. 42/50 are on obeying him, pleasing him, or accepting his will. 7/8 are on living for God. 2/2 are on exclusive loyalty to God. Two important metaphors describe this commitment in terms of slavery or servanthood to God (5/5). We will discuss this image in the next study.

Godliness

Closely related to commitment and obedience is holiness, godliness, or Christian character, which we will encompass under the term godliness. This is presented as a response to God 28 times covering 30 verses. 18/19 describe Christians as consecrated or holy to God. 4/4 express this as honesty and sincerity before God. 6/7 refer to reflecting or bearing God's glory or image or honour.

Godliness is possibly the biggest theme of the Epistles in terms of frequency of occurrence, though it does not always appear along with some reference to God. I found that about 1,400 of the 2,005 verses in Paul's Epistles deal in some way with the issue of godliness—that is, about 70% of the verses. Different scholars have focussed on different features that they regard as the key emphasis in Paul. Justification by faith, redemption through Christ (Longnecker, 1971, p. 90), reconciliation (Martin, 1981), freedom (Bruce, 1977), mystical union with Christ (Schweitzer, 1931), being in Christ (Stewart, 1935), the coming of the new age (Ladd, 1993, pp. 412-413), and the doctrine of God (Ryrie, 1982, pp. 167, 203) have been suggested as the key to understanding Paul's thought. I think in addition to these, the idea of Paul being a preacher of godliness needs fresh consideration.

Accountability to God

The awesome truth that we are accountable to God also appears often (33/37). Before making a solemn statement, Paul often presents God as his witness, or he sometimes takes oaths by God's name (13/15). He alerts us to the prospect of having to give an account to God either now or at the second coming or judgement (20/22). Wrong relationships with God are described 53 times in Paul covering 57 verses.

The statistics given above show that the response to God recommended by Paul primarily has to do with spiritual things. There is almost nothing on how to do ministry, though Paul has a lot of advice on leadership. Acts, of course, gives us models of how ministry was done in the early church. I think there is a striking difference between the emphases of Paul and of those of the church today.

Challenges for Today

The above study demonstrates that the doctrine of God is a very important theme in the evangelistic preaching in Acts and in Paul's teaching to the young churches. In Paul's basic introduction to the gospel (Romans), for example, he uses the word "God" 153 times, an average of once in every 46 words (Morris, 1986, p. 25). If we are to have a healthy church, then, we must certainly capture the essence of the New Testament teaching about God.

The Evangelical church has been experiencing remarkable growth in many parts of the world. Some of the growth has taken place in so-called Christian countries through the renewal of nominals. But also there has been growth through the conversion of non-Christians. In both of these evangelistic ministries, people have been attracted to the gospel through the demonstration of some of the subjective blessings that come from trust-

ing in God. This is a valid method and, as we have seen, was an important means of making contact with non-Christians in Acts. But that experience of God's power in meeting individual needs may have caused the church to neglect emphasising other important aspects of God's nature, as is seen in the preaching of Acts and the Epistles.

We have seen that the sovereignty of God, his righteousness, and judgement are important themes in Paul. We have seen how important it is for us to view God as the one who gives us the great gift of eternal salvation. We have seen that the theme of godliness figures heavily when Paul talks about God's will for us, about God's post-salvation blessings, and about our response to God. These factors pose significant challenges to the church today, and their neglect could result in our missing some important features of biblical Christianity. Below I will discuss just a few features in the New Testament portrayal of God that present a challenge to today's church.

God's sovereignty and our involvement in the world

We saw above that both in the preaching of Acts and in the Epistles of Paul, God is presented as the creator of the world who is the sovereign Lord of history. Paul even asserts that the "secular" governing authorities in society have been established by God (Rom. 13:1). The book of Revelation looks forward to the day when "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). "The image suggests the transference of the world empire, once dominated by a usurping power, that has now at

length passed into the hands of its true owner and king" (Johnson, 1981, citing H. B. Swete).

If the world is so much the arena of God's activity, then Christians must think of this world as a key arena of their service. Trinitarian mission would include involvement in the world, whereby Christians seek to uphold God's values (some would say "kingdom values"), so that the various structures of society are brought into conformity with God's will. Some would not include such activity under the word "mission." The church will debate on the nature of the relationship between this activity, evangelism, the church, and the kingdom of God.⁴ While these necessary debates will continue and hopefully will help us to clarify the nature of our mission, we can affirm that our belief in God as creator of the world and sovereign Lord of history drives us to active involvement in this world.

Jesus asked us to be "the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13). That means, "What is good in society his followers keep wholesome. What is corrupt they oppose; they penetrate society for good and act as a kind of moral antiseptic" (Morris, 1992, p. 104). I am mentioning this aspect of Christian responsibility only in passing, for the sake of completeness in expounding on a trinitarian basis of mission.

The crisis of holiness in the church today

A magical view of God

Many non-Christians who have come to Christ recently have come from backgrounds where the relationship with and understanding of God were somewhat magical. In their earlier faiths, there wasn't the idea of a love relationship with a holy

⁴ For a brief and helpful summary of approaches used on the issue of how the church should influence the structures of the world, see Bosch (1993). For a helpful attempt to harmonise the different biblical emphases, see Hiebert (1993).

God to whom they are accountable. Instead, the gods were viewed as powerful beings to whom they could go for favours. There was no idea of being accountable to God in daily life. Instead, there were some rules that had to be followed, if they were to receive the blessing. The rules might be something like abstaining from meat or making regular offerings at the temple. This conception of God has been associated in the minds of some with Christianity too. Often in Sri Lanka when I talk to non-Christians, they tell me that they also believe in Christianity. When I probe the matter further, I find that what they mean is they believe in the power of St. Anthony and go to St. Anthony's Church in Colombo in order to receive some favours.

Today many are attracted to the God of the Bible through the demonstration of power. They see God meeting some need in their lives, and that prompts them to accept the Christian gospel that is presented to them. But often they come to him as if they were coming to any of the other gods, though they have come to believe that this God is more powerful than these other gods. So they shift their allegiance to the Christian God. They will try to follow the rules prescribed by this God. They will attend church. They will pay their tithes. (Today's teaching about tithing has such a high emphasis on the blessings promised to tithers that it can become like a magical formula for blessing.) The idea that they are accountable to a holy God who demands their total allegiance and who hates their unholiness is not very strong in the thinking of many new Christians. Most did not come to God to be saved from the terrible consequences of sin. They came for things like healing from a sickness or deliverance from a demon or a financial crisis.

Consequently, some recent converts are reverting to old practices when they

do not seem to receive positive answers to their requests. They do not seem to sense the horror with which the Bible views such a reversal to past practices. There is a great need, then, to ensure that converts to Christianity understand that the heart of the gospel has to do with eternal salvation and that the greatest blessing of becoming a Christian is the rescue from eternal damnation and the gift of everlasting life. Then converts would stay along the Christian path, even if some temporal blessings they wanted are not granted, not wanting to forfeit the greatest blessing—eternal salvation.

Most of the people in the church I attend are converts from Buddhism. Most of them were first brought to church by another member who said that God could meet some specific need in their life. They kept coming after their first visit and gradually came to understand the gospel. They subsequently accepted Christ as their Saviour, took baptism, and joined the membership of the church. Most of these people could explain the gospel quite clearly. But when they think of God, I believe that most often their focus is on the temporal blessings he provides.

This is seen in the testimony time that we have every Sunday. Most of the testimonies are on God's provision of temporal blessings, such as healing from sickness and the provision of a job or sufficient funds to meet a need. I was thinking about this a few Sundays ago, when one person got up and gave thanks for the riches of God's grace in salvation. He is paralysed from his waist down, but he has been used mightily by God, through his powerful and radiant personal witness, to introduce many to Christ. I wondered whether the negative answer to thousands of prayers for his healing had nourished in his soul a fuller appreciation for the riches of God's saving grace, which are far richer than the temporal blessings often mentioned.

When Philipp Nicolai was pastor at Unna, Germany, a plague hit the town resulting in hundreds of deaths. His window overlooked the cemetery, and sometimes there were as many as 30 burials in a single day. The following words he wrote describe how he got through this difficult period in his life: "There seemed to me nothing more sweet, delightful, and agreeable than the contemplation of the noble, sublime doctrine of eternal life obtained through the blood of Christ. This I allowed to dwell in my heart day and night" (Peterson & Peterson, 1995, Nov. 11). The focus on eternal salvation has been a hallmark of the Evangelical Movement over the years. There may be a need for fresh emphasis on this in this era when many are coming to Christ by first being attracted to his ability to meet their felt needs.

The crisis of godliness

One of the sad consequences of the scenario I have described above is the lack of godliness among Christians. This has reached epidemic proportions in many countries, as in Sri Lanka. Though thousands have come to Christ, many of them still continue to lie, are dishonest with money, or are unchristian in the way they relate to their spouses, neighbours, employers, or employees. The incidence of serious sexual immorality among Christian workers is alarming.

This lack of godliness is a problem in all societies that do not take into account the reality of a supreme and holy God to whom people are morally accountable. So in spite of the high moral ethic of Buddhism, Sri Lanka's national religion, we are crippled by corruption, and the level of sexual immorality in our supposedly conservative villages is shocking. The same could be said of Hinduism in India. The veteran theologian/missionary to India, Dr. Bruce Nicholls, once told me that he

feels that one of the primary causes for the rise of Hindu fundamentalism in India is the moral vacuum that exists there and the havoc it is causing.

This has become a problem in the West also. Many of the social structures of the West are built upon the foundation that we are accountable to a holy God. Therefore, there is a high place given to trust in the way society functions. People are expected to be honest at supermarkets, to be pure when dating a member of the opposite sex, and to be truthful when exercising their freedom of expression in the media. The freedom and democracy, which the West jealously guards, were originally founded upon the fact that the supreme God to whom we are accountable is just and holy. I shudder to think of the final consequences of people jettisoning that idea for a more pluralistic or pantheistic idea of the divine.

Communism worked relatively smoothly as people were restrained through the totalitarian authority of the state. But now that the people have won their political "freedom," many former Communist countries have become enslaved to corruption and the Mafia. Recent polls taken in some of these countries suggest that large numbers of the population prefer the situation they had under Communism. There isn't the restraining influence of a belief in a holy God, which enables them to handle their freedom responsibly.

Biblical Christians are afraid of sinning, partly because they know that God hates sin and punishes it. Much of the teaching about judgement in the New Testament is given to Christians. The prospect of reaping what we sow is a serious one for biblical Christians. So when they are tempted to do the sinful acts that are commonplace in society, there is a check in their spirit that warns them of the awful consequences of sin. Jesus put it bluntly when

he said that it would be better to gouge out the eye and cut off the hand that cause us to sin rather than keep them and be cast into hell (Matt. 5:29-30). But the church today, reflecting the post-modern mood of the day, has focussed more on the subjective blessings that come from God than on the important implications of the holiness of God. Therefore, as statistics are showing, there is an alarming incidence of moral lapses among Christians. While moral lapses have always accompanied the life of the church, what is new today is the lack of moral criteria—Christians don't seem to feel that sin is all that serious (see Veith, 1994, p. 18).

So we are faced with a huge crisis in the church. There are Christians who could describe the way of salvation but whose behaviour is not influenced by the Christian worldview: people who could lie without batting an eyelid, pastors who could speak abusively to their wives on Sunday morning and preach a little later from the pulpit. We are in danger of losing the blessings that have come as a result of the recent church growth. If we do not urgently take remedial action, we are in danger of entering another dark age of nominalism.

Towards an Answer

What is the answer to this problem? I believe a key is for the church to be presenting a fuller (biblical) picture of God in its various activities. This way Christians could imbibe the biblical worldview, because it is a natural part of the Christian environment in which they grow. This should be reflected in the church's programmes of evangelism, nurture, and worship.

Evangelism

I have heard some powerful healing evangelists, such as Reinhard Bonke, who give good emphasis to the gospel facts in their preaching. But I know that there are many others whose evangelistic preaching focusses primarily on the power of God to help overcome temporal problems and whose invitation to the people is to come to God in order to have these problems solved. I think there is a subtle temptation here. Needs-oriented preaching is so attractive to people that it is easy to ignore the other aspects of the gospel. Yet, as we saw earlier, the preaching to the unreached in Acts emphasised such things as God as creator and as the sovereign and holy One who will judge all people. The first preachers confronted people about their accountability to him and about the need to repent and turn from sin and idols to God. We too must learn the art of moving from felt needs to the gospel, from the appetiser to the main meal.

Some exciting new programmes have been developed recently to introduce the unreached to the Christian worldview. For example, the "Chronological Approach" developed by New Tribes Mission introduces people to the Old Testament understanding of God before presenting the story of Jesus. The result is that by the time missionaries present the story of Jesus' sacrifice for sin, the people are ready to receive it.⁵

Christian nurture

Even if many do not fully understand the gospel when they first trust in God for salvation, the basic gospel facts should constantly recur in the teaching and preaching to believers in the church. We must show that God hates and judges

⁵ This approach is vividly presented in two videos entitled "It Is True" and "Now We See Clearly" and the series of books entitled *Building on Firm Foundations*, all produced by New Tribes Mission.

unbelief, sin, and falsehood and that in our natural state we would be headed for an eternity in hell. This will give a good background for presenting the marvels of grace, which caused the gospel events and enabled such a holy God to grant us eternal salvation. I have heard of missions that are using the book of Ephesians as a basic follow-up book for new Christians because of its emphasis on grace and its implications for daily life.

Reflection on God's holiness and sovereignty will also serve as an incentive to holiness. This will provide us with a good background for presenting the strong ethical teaching that appears in the Epistles. The strong ethic of Buddhism in Sri Lanka includes a regular pledge to abstain from lying as one of its most basic features. But that has not helped reduce the lying which seems to be a characteristic feature of our people. We have found that, despite teaching on the Christian ethic in the church, converts from Buddhism still continue to lie. We need a worldview to back ethical teaching if we are to expect people to have the strength and the will to conform to it. For the Christian, such a worldview comes from the doctrine of God.

A Western Christian leader who had served in Asia for several years recently told me that we should not define integrity for Asian Christians in the same way that those in the West do it, because our understanding of right and wrong is different from that in the West. I have thought about that a lot recently. The thought that came to me is that we do not need to look at the West for a definition of integrity. Rather, let us look at the Bible, which sets a very high standard and challenges every culture in every generation. Besides, what havoc the practical understanding of integrity in our nations has caused in Asia! Surely Christianity should be judging the culture rather than conforming to it when it comes to moral issues like integrity.

Over the past few years, I have been preaching the message of scriptural holiness a great deal in different Evangelical churches in Sri Lanka. What people keep telling me is that this is a message they rarely hear in the church today. Recently, I taught at a pastor's conference in the east of Sri Lanka. As the people there were Tamil-speaking, I had to speak through interpretation. My interpreter remarked that what I taught was the other side of what they are usually taught. He agreed fully with what I said, but it was a message that had been taught only very rarely. I don't think the problem with our churches is one of heresy. Rather, it is one of a lopsided emphasis. The message of God meeting our temporal needs and the message of God's power over evil forces are so relevant to people's needs that we are focussing primarily on these areas and are neglecting other important truths.

During the prayer request time in our church, as with the testimony time, most of the requests are about temporal needs. And this is very valid, for God cares about our personal, temporal needs. One Sunday a godly leader, whose life is an example to all of us, got up to ask for prayer that he will listen to his wife and consider her opinions more carefully. A jarring shift of gears seemed to have taken place. It placed before all of us the need to seek the most important things in life.

The contemporary approach to truth will be a major obstacle in our efforts to present the Christian ethic in the church. Words have lost their value in this post-modern generation. This is a fairly new phenomenon in the West, but we have lived with such a state of affairs for a longer time in the East. Often a person, when asked to come to do a repair job in a home, will say something like, "I'll come tomorrow," without any intention of coming on that day.

Because of this mindset, many Christians find it difficult to believe that the Word is powerful to effect a change in people's lives. Yet the Bible is clear about the sanctifying power of the Word. Jesus said, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Evangelicals subscribe to the doctrine of Scripture's inspiration as presented in 2 Timothy 3:16a: "All Scripture is God-breathed." But in practice we act as if we don't believe in the rest of that sentence: "... and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

One of our greatest challenges today is to restore confidence in the power of the Word among Christians in a generation that has lost its belief in the power of words. Surely one of the keys to this is giving sufficient time to prepare biblical messages which demonstrate that the Bible is relevant to the issues of the day. This is a discipline to cultivate in this activist generation. I believe the primary cause for the drop in popularity of expository sermons in the church today is that such messages take much longer to prepare than other types of sermons.

Another key is for church leaders to demonstrate the power of the Word by putting into practice what it teaches, thus living loving and holy lives. Because of our pragmatic orientation, we might permit talented but unholy people to represent the church publicly in its programmes. We may end up having good programmes and large crowds who are attracted because of their quality. But these unholy but talented people will, in the long run, communicate the message that the biblical

ethic is neither practical nor essential for Christian living.

Worship

It seems that the focus of our worship also has moved away from a focus on the fullness of God's nature and its implications to the Christian. We have already talked about how testimonies today focus almost entirely on God's provision of temporal needs. The praise of God in the Epistles is primarily based on grace. This is evidenced by the number of times the grace of God and related themes appear. Five of Paul's great doxologies in his Epistles spring from his contemplating the marvels of grace (Rom. 11:33-36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; Eph. 3:21; 1 Tim. 1:17). 46 times Paul says that God deserves to be praised, thanked, and glorified. An analysis of the cause for such praises yielded the following results: Several times the praise or thanks is over faithful Christians. A few times it is over the ministry that God has given Paul, over missionary giving, and over things like food. The rest of the occurrences either say simply that God himself must be praised and glorified or that he is praised for the gospel or for salvation.

A key to worship is the church's hymnody. It is also a key to the churches' educating of Christians. It used to be said that Charles Wesley's hymns were the means by which the early Methodist Movement taught its people doctrine. Therefore, our hymns can take a major role in teaching Christians the biblical worldview. The current revival of interest in worship is a promising sign, with great possibility for enriching the church. The "song leader" coming from days of the evangelistic rallies has been replaced by the "worship leader."

It is well known that worship songs have by and large replaced the great hymns of the faith and gospel songs, which

were the two previous forms of song in the Evangelical church (see Hamilton, 1999; Noll, 1999). The hymns of the faith came primarily from the 18th and 19th centuries. They emphasised God's nature and the glory of his salvation. There was a high emphasis on praise and adoration. The gospel songs came from the late 19th to mid-20th centuries. These focussed more on testifying about the marvels of grace. Unlike the hymns, the emphasis was more on testimony (people to people) than worship (people to God), in keeping with the emphasis on evangelism and personal salvation in the Evangelical Movement of that era. These emphases are keys to the rich heritage of Evangelicalism.

We can be thankful that the worship songs have helped the Evangelical church to rediscover biblical worship. We would hope that the emphases conveyed by the hymns and the gospel songs would now be conveyed through this medium to enrich worship and teach Christians the basic features of the Christian worldview. I believe that this is happening in the English-speaking world through the works of songwriters like Graham Kendrick. But I believe a great deal of work remains to be done in this area in the churches in other cultures.

Conclusion

The burden of this study is that the church needs to be giving fresh emphasis to the biblical doctrine of God. There are concepts in the Bible that are strange to the world around us, and the church may not have emphasised them as much as she should. In order to remedy this situation, we will need to communicate "the whole counsel of God" carefully and effectively in our evangelism, nurture, and worship. We will need to model Christianity by conscientiously putting into practise in our lives the truths implied by God's nature.

We will need to engage, with a reasoned critique, those features of the culture which are hostile to the biblical understanding of God and show why the Christian gospel has provided "a new and living way" that surpasses by far all other ways. This is going to be more urgent in the 21st century than before, as ideas hostile to the Christian worldview are growing rapidly all over the world.

References

- Bosch, D. J. (1993). God's reign and the rulers of this world. In C. Van Engen, D. S. Gilliland, & P. Pierson (Eds.), *The good news of the kingdom* (pp. 89-95). Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Bruce, F. F. (1977). *Paul: Apostle of the heart set free*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Hamilton, M. S. (1999, July 12). The triumph of praise songs: How guitars beat out the organ in the worship wars. *Christianity Today*, 43, pp. 29-35.
- Hiebert, P. G. (1993). Evangelism, church, and kingdom. In C. Van Engen, D. S. Gilliland, & P. Pierson (Eds.), *The good news of the kingdom* (pp. 153-161). Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Johnson, A. F. (1981). Revelation. In F. E. Gaebelien (Ed.), *Expositor's Bible commentary* (pp. 397-603). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Ladd, G. E. (1993). In D. A. Hagner (Ed.), *A theology of the New Testament* (rev. ed.) (pp. 412-413). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Longnecker, R. N. (1971). *The ministry and message of Paul*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Martin, R. P. (1981). *Reconciliation: A study of Paul's theology*. Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press.
- Morris, L. (1986). *New Testament theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- . (1992). *The gospel according to Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

- Noll, M. A. (1999, July 12). We are what we sing: Our classic hymns reveal evangelicalism at its best. *Christianity Today*, 43, pp. 37-41.
- Peterson, W. J., & Peterson, R. (1995). *One year book of hymns*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- Ryrie, C. C. (1982). *Biblical theology of the New Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Schweitzer, A. (1931). *The mysticism of Paul the apostle*. London: A. & C. Black, Ltd.
- Stewart, J. S. (1935). *A man in Christ*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Veith, G. E., Jr. (1994). *Postmodern times: A Christian guide to contemporary thought and culture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.



Ajith Fernando has led Sri Lanka Youth for Christ since 1976. Convinced of a call to theologise from the grassroots, he has always led a small division in YFC and presently leads the work with drug dependents. His YFC responsibilities include teaching and pastoral care of staff. Ajith and his wife Nelun are active in the leadership of a Methodist church, most of whose members are converts from other religions. He has a Th.M. in New Testament from Fuller Theological Seminary. His nine books have been in the area of either Bible exposition, such as the *NIV Application Commentary: Acts* (Zondervan, 1998), or mission theology, such as *The Supremacy of Christ* (Crossway, 1995).



Jesus: the message and model of mission

AJITH
FERNANDO

WHEN WE LOOK at the Second Person of the Trinity in our trinitarian approach to mission, our study could take two directions. The first and most basic direction would be to look at Jesus as the message of mission, that is, at the person and work of Christ. The second would be to look at him as the model for mission, that is, to focus on his life and ministry. Perhaps because I have written four books relating to Jesus as the message of mission (Fernando, 1983, 1989, 1994, 1995), I decided to focus on Jesus as the model in this study.

Jesus: The Message of Mission

For the sake of completeness, we will briefly list what we would mean by Jesus being the message of mission. Essentially we would say that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life,¹ and that no one comes to the Father but by him (John 14:6). Salvation is from God, and it is made real in our lives by the work of the Holy Spirit, but it is made available to us through the work of Christ. His work, consisting of incarnation, life on earth, death, resurrection, exaltation, and consummation at the end of time, makes him the way to salvation. The idea of the work of Christ resulting in saving grace upon unworthy sinners goes contrary to much of the thinking of the New Age Movement and world religions that give more weight to the place of human ability in earning salvation. This is a challenge calling for fresh thinking by Evangelical thinkers.²

¹ My book *The Supremacy of Christ* (Fernando, 1995) follows the outline of Jesus as the truth, the way, and the life and deals with various challenges arising today to these affirmations.

² I have tried to do this in Fernando (1995, chaps. 9-11).

There are challenges today from within the church too to the affirmation that the work of Christ is the way of salvation for humankind. It is customary to refer to three approaches to this issue: pluralism, inclusivism, and exclusivism. But within these three viewpoints, there is a wide spectrum of variation and shades of emphases.³ Pluralists will not confine the means of salvation to the work of one saviour, keeping all proposed ways to salvation as more or less equals in the universe of faiths.⁴ The inclusivists include all possible ways of salvation under the work of Christ, affirming that all who are saved are saved by Christ. But they do not confine salvation only to those who have heard and responded to the gospel of Christ. On one extreme there are inclusivists who speak of salvation through (the “sacraments” of) other faiths.⁵ On the other extreme are inclusivists who say that only those who respond in repentance and faith to what they know of the supreme God, in a way similar to what is described in the Bible, can be saved (Anderson, 1984). There are other inclusivists who are found at different positions between these two extremes.⁶ The exclusivists or particularists confine salvation to those who hear and respond to the gospel of Christ.⁷ There are some today who would have previously been described as inclusivists, who prefer to call themselves exclusivists because they only leave the door open to

salvation according to the second group of inclusivists described above, but they place their emphasis on the saving work of Christ and its efficacy (Wright, 1997, p. 51). There are others who prefer to remain agnostic on the issue of whether those who have not heard the gospel could be saved (Newbiggin, 1978, pp. 88, 196; Shenk, 1997; Stott, 1988).

Then there is the huge issue of universalism, the view that in the end all will be saved. Those in the church who hold this view generally leave room for repentance and a sort of purgatory or even reincarnation after life on earth (Bonda, 1998; Hick, 1976, 1979; Robinson, 1968). Annihilationism, the view that those who remain impenitent to the end will be annihilated through the destructive fires of hell, has been gaining ground among Christians of different traditions in recent years (Froom, 1965; Fudge, 1982; Pinnock, 1990; Wenham, 1992).

The dual nature of Jesus as divine and human expressed during his life, ministry, and teaching on earth makes us confident to affirm that he is the truth (John 1:1-14; 14:6-11). By that we mean that he is the ultimate reality—not just the bearer of truth, but absolute truth personified. This affirmation runs counter to the religious pluralism that is a popular approach to truth in intellectual circles today. It needs to be defended, and one of the keys to this defence is demonstrating that the

³ There is such an enormous amount of literature that has been published representing the different views in recent times that I have decided to mention only names of representatives of the different views. Four different views are presented in Okholm & Phillips (1995). John Hick argues for a pluralistic view, Clark H. Pinnock argues for an inclusivist view, and Alister McGrath, Douglas Geivett, and Gary Phillips argue for two particularist varieties of views. See also Crockett & Sigountos (1991), which gives a variety of Evangelical positions.

⁴ See the writings of John Hick, Paul Knitter, and Wesley Ariarajah.

⁵ See the writings of Raymundo Pannikar, Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, and S. J. Samartha.

⁶ See the writings of Clark Pinnock and John Sanders.

⁷ See the writings of Dick Dowsett, Ajith Fernando, Hywel Jones, Erwin Lutzer, Ronald Nash, and Ramesh Richard.

Gospels contain objective and true statements of Jesus which present his absolute Lordship and deity. If these points can be demonstrated, then the Jesus of history is the same as the Christ of faith. Demonstrating the historical validity, the objective reality, and the enduring importance of the statements attributed to Christ in the Gospels is therefore a key challenge facing Evangelicals in today's pluralistic environment.⁸

The result of experiencing salvation is that Jesus opens the door to what the Bible calls eternal life (John 3:16; 5:24). Jesus said that he came to enable us to enjoy a completely fulfilling life (John 10:10). Therefore, we can refer to Jesus as "the life" (John 14:6). At its essence, this life consists of a relationship with God (John 17:3), who is both loving and holy. I have argued elsewhere⁹ that this relationship opens the door for biblical spirituality, which provides an experience surpassing, by virtue of its completeness, the fulfillment claimed by the many other spiritual systems vying for the allegiance of people today.

Jesus as Example in the New Testament

The rest of this study will look at Jesus as the model for mission, together with some of the implications for today. Jesus is directly presented as the missionary model in John 17:18 ("As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world") and John 20:21 ("As the Father has sent me, I am sending you"). In preparing this study, I looked for ways in which Jesus was presented as a model in the New Testament. I may have missed locating some important passages, but those I

found yielded some surprising discoveries.

Non-Pauline passages

I considered 13 (14 with repetition) non-Pauline passages which present Jesus as a model. Three make general statements of the principle. These are the two passages just referred to (John 17:18 and 20:21) and 1 John 2:5-6, "But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did." All the others deal with either servanthood, humility, suffering, or deprivation.

There are three passages on servanthood and humility. When Jesus explained that he came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many, he presented that as our model for greatness (Mark 10:43-45; also repeated in Matt. 20:25-28). When a dispute arose about which of the disciples was the greatest, Jesus said that the greatest is the one who serves. He then said, "I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:24-27). After Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, he presented that action as something his disciples were to emulate (John 13:14-17).

The remaining seven passages present Jesus as a model of suffering and deprivation. This number would climb to nine if we considered the two times already discussed of Jesus giving his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:43-45; Matt. 20:25-28). I will simply list some of these passages below:

- "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12-13).

⁸ On the topic of Jesus as the truth and related issues, see Fernando (1995, chaps. 1-8).

⁹ See Fernando (1995, chaps. 12-16) and especially Fernando (2000).

- “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Heb. 12:2-3).

- “And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore” (Heb. 13:12-13).

- “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” (1 John 3:16-17).

The passages I left out are 1 Peter 2:19-24, 1 Peter 3:17-18, and 1 Peter 4:1-2.

Paul's Epistles

I was able to find 15 references to Jesus as a model in the Epistles of Paul, and a similar pattern was found here as in the non-Pauline sections of the New Testament. I found one general reference to Christ as our model: “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). Two references are about forgiving as Christ forgave (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13), and two are about meekness and gentleness (2 Cor. 10:1; 11:17).

Two passages about servanthood are worth noting. The first is given in a passage that is describing Christian behaviour, Romans 15:7-9: “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy.”

The other is the famous Christological hymn given in the context of striving for unity: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Phil. 2:5-8).

This passage carries the idea of suffering also. It and eight other passages present Jesus as a model of suffering and deprivation. Consider the following:

- “I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:8-9).

- “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph. 5:1-2).

- “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25).

- “May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance” (2 Thess. 3:5).

The passages I left out are Romans 15:2-4, Ephesians 5:28-29, 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6, and 2 Timothy 2:8.

These are not the only ways in which Christ is an example to Christians. But the evidence presented above suggests that these exhortations should be particularly significant when considering Christ as a model, for they are the features that are specifically mentioned in the New Testament. When we think of Jesus as the missionary model, therefore, the main themes

that should come to mind, on the one hand, are meekness, humility, servanthood, and forgiving others, and on the other hand, suffering and deprivation.

The Sufferings of Christian Leaders in Paul

Paul presents Christian leaders as examples 13 times covering 23 verses. But only four of these references present leaders as models of suffering (1 Thess. 1:5-6; 2:14-15; 2 Thess. 1:5; 2 Tim. 3:10-11). However, in eight places covering 23 verses Paul presents suffering as a source of credibility for ministry. This is implied in many more passages too. Here are three key passages:

- “But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me. I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast” (1 Cor. 9:15).

- “Let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus” (Gal. 6:17).

- “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (Eph. 4:1).

The Epistles of Paul vividly present different ways in which he and other Christians suffered:

- 17 times covering 24 verses we have what we may call general listings of suffering.

- 6(times)/6(verses) he mentions weakness.

- 5/6 danger
- 6/12 enemies and hostility
- 1/1 being unsettled
- 5/8 false accusations and slander
- 6/8 humiliation
- 2/3 loneliness
- 8/15 voluntary deprivation
- 16/20 imprisonment
- 1/1 martyrdom

- 3/4 being deserted by friends and/or other Christians

- 6/8 physical harm and deprivation
- 7/7 hard work
- 3/5 groaning
- 8/11 anguish and distress
- 1/1 pressure

Interestingly, not all of these forms of suffering have to do with persecution. Often I hear Christians in affluent countries comment that Christians who live in poorer countries where they are a minority suffer a lot. The implication is that Christians in the West don't have to suffer much. Most of the types of suffering in the above list cannot be confined to poorer nations where Christians are a minority. Of the 17 points listed, only three or four are not applicable to those in richer Western cultures. The rest are experiences that Christians anywhere who are committed to the gospel and to people will face. Christian leaders who are committed to people will suffer wherever they are. The problem is that this type of suffering can be avoided by avoiding some of the implications of being committed to people. As commitment to people seems to be a lost art today, I think we are seeing a lot of avoidance of suffering by Christian leaders.

Thus far we have come up with a few conclusions in our quest for what it means to follow Christ's model in mission. Firstly, the predominant themes presented to us to model from the life of Jesus are meekness, humility, and servanthood on the one hand and suffering and deprivation on the other. Then we looked at what Paul presented about the suffering of leaders and concluded that suffering is a key to the credibility of leaders and that leaders even today do suffer a lot in various ways, wherever they may be living. Now let us turn to look at what Paul has to say about the servanthood of leaders.

Servanthood in the New Testament

There are two word groups commonly used for the idea of servant in the New Testament. The *diakonos* word group carries the idea of servant or minister and the *doulos* word group the idea of slave. Both these words are used for Jesus and for Christians. For this study, I did not consider the *oikonomos* word group, which has the stewardship idea, as it is not used for Jesus in the New Testament.

The *diakonos* word group

Words belonging to the *diakonos* group are used three times for Jesus (four with repetition). Jesus said of himself that he “did not come to be served (*diakonēthēnai*), but to serve (*diakonēsai*), and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45; also Matt. 20:28). He said, “For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27). Paul said, “For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy” (Rom. 15:8-9).

This word group is used of Christians in different ways. Looking only at Paul’s Epistles, we find it used in the following ways:

- 14 times, as servants/ministers in a general sense.
- 15 times, as servants of fellow Christians or the church.
- 9 times, as servants of the gospel, evangelism, or the New Covenant.
- 4 times, referring to the office of deacon in the church.

The frequency of occurrence of these words suggests that the idea of servant is very important when constructing a biblical idea of leadership and mission, espe-

cially as this word is used of Jesus, our model for mission.

The *doulos* word group

The *doulos* word group, which carries the idea of slave, is used twice for Jesus (three, with repetition). Its use for Jesus is implied in Mark 10:43-45, where Jesus says, “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant (*diakonos*), and whoever wants to be first must be slave (*doulos*) of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served (*diakonēthēnai*), but to serve (*diakonēsai*), and to give his life as a ransom for many” (also Matt. 20:27). After saying that we must be slaves of all, Jesus presents himself as the example of such slavery. The connection between Jesus and slavery is clearer in Philippians 2:7, which says that he “made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant (*doulou*), being made in human likeness.”

This word group is used often for Christians too. Looking again only at Paul’s Epistles, we find *doulos*-related words used of Christians in the following manner:

- 15 times, we are slaves of Christ or of God.
- Twice, the slavery principle is outlined as a neutral value.
- 13 times, people are slaves to sin, law, demonic powers, fear, and wine.
- 5 times, we are slaves to righteousness.
- One verse refers to subduing our body and making it our slave.
- There are 18 references to slavery as one’s job in society.
- Once, creation is a slave to decay.

The above instances are not of much significance to our study, though we must note that the idea of our being slaves of Christ or of God is basic to Christian living and thus to mission. The following uses of *doulos*-related words, however, are

very significant for our study. Once Paul describes Timothy as a slave of the gospel: "But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served (*edouleusen*) with me in the work of the gospel" (Phil. 2:22). Three times in Paul we see the idea of Christians being slaves of people to whom they are called to minister. 1 Corinthians 9:19 says, "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave (*edoulōsa*) to everyone, to win as many as possible." In 2 Corinthians 4:5 Paul describes himself as the slave of the incorrigible Corinthians! "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants (*doulous*) for Jesus' sake." In Galatians 5:13 he advises Christians, "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve (*douleuete*) one another in love."

There is an interesting translation practice followed by most English translations, and in translations in other languages too. When the slavery metaphor is used for slavery to forces like sin, law, and demonic powers (e.g., Rom. 6-7; Gal. 4-5), the translators used words such as "slave" and "slavery." But in most of the references where Christians are presented as slaves of Christ, of God, of the gospel, or of the people they serve, the translators used the words "servant" or "serve." This strange phenomenon was found from the time of the earliest English translations. Experts in biblical Greek are now telling us that this is an inadequate way to translate these *doulos*-group words, i.e., they should carry the idea of slave rather than servant.

Murray Harris (1999) has recently written a monograph, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion*

to Christ, where he does a thorough study of the use of the *doulos* words and shows that they should be translated with the slave idea rather than the servant idea. He looks for reasons for this strange phenomenon that *doulos* was not translated as slave. He suggests that modern slavery was so terrible that the translators would not have wanted to bring that idea to our biblical thinking. First century slavery was much more humane:

"In the first century, slaves were not distinguishable from free persons by race, by speech, or by clothing; they were sometimes more highly educated than their owners and held responsible professional positions; some persons sold themselves into slavery for economic or social advantage; they could reasonably hope to be emancipated after 10 to 20 years of service or by their 30s at the latest; they were not denied the right to public assembly and were not socially segregated (at least in the cities); they could accumulate savings to buy their freedom; their natural inferiority was not assumed" (Harris, 1999, p. 44).

I think that if Paul encountered slavery of the type found in modern times, he would have attacked it more vehemently.¹⁰ Anyway, we have missed an important biblical emphasis by replacing "slave" with "servant."

What, then, does the term *doulos* imply when it is used in the New Testament of our relationship with God, Christ, and the people we serve? After a long discussion, Harris (1999, pp. 104-105) concludes, "The term *doulos* expresses both a vertical and a horizontal relationship of the Christian, who is both a willing vassal of the heavenly Master and the submissive servant of fellow believers." He says,

¹⁰ Yet Paul proclaimed the breaking of social distinctions through Christ (Gal. 3:28; Philemon). Harris (1999, p. 68) says, "... in undermining the discriminatory hierarchy of social relations that is at the heart of slavery, Christianity sounded the death-knell of slavery."

“The term epitomises the Christian’s dual obligation: *unquestioning devotion* to Christ and to his people” [emphasis added].

I believe that by not using the slavery idea where it should be used, we have missed some key features of the nature of the Christian life and of Christian ministry. Christian leaders are servants of the people. It is unfortunate that the most popularly used Sinhala word for pastor in recent times has the idea of “ruler of the church”—an idea so distant from the idea of slavery!

We will now look at some of the challenges the church faces when it considers the missionary model as presented by Jesus as involving servanthood, slavery, meekness, suffering, and deprivation.

Servanthood/Meekness and the Warfare Mentality

As we look at the growth of the church amongst the unreached today, we would see that at the forefront of it are bold pioneers who have trusted God and gone to the unreached with a fiery sense of vocation. They have resisted persecution and overcome numerous obstacles. They have doggedly stuck to their task amidst much to discourage them. And they have reaped a great harvest for the kingdom. Most of them are unknown outside their immediate ecclesiastical circles, but I believe they are the real heroes of this era in the history of the church.

Recently these pioneers have been influenced by the fresh emphasis on spiritual warfare that has come from the West. This has been an integral part of ministry in the Third World all along, as encounter with the demonic is a very common experience in day-to-day life. However, in recent years Christian workers have seen an emphasis on breaking down strongholds, which has further sensitised them to the

battle before them. There is much that is healthy here. With the breakdown of the rationalist stranglehold of modernism in the West, there is now a greater openness to the supernatural among Christians too. But sometimes it is not easy for these rugged pioneers, now influenced by this fresh emphasis on victory over opposing forces, to harmonise their battle emphasis with the emphasis on the meekness and gentleness of Christ and servanthood. There is a sense that they must win, in a worldly way, every battle they encounter with forces (human and supernatural) that oppose their work.

Some Sri Lankan Christian leaders were invited to a television dialogue with some Buddhist leaders on inter-religious relationships and conversion. Some came with a desire to use the opportunity to witness to the power of the gospel. They went outside the accepted norms for such programmes, debating on behalf of the supremacy of Christ. This could have been an opportunity to allay some of the unfounded fears of the Buddhist leaders who are strongly opposing Christian evangelism in Sri Lanka. It served instead to confirm those fears and increase their resolve to stamp out all Christian evangelistic efforts. This was an opportunity to gently present an apologetic for Christian evangelism to those who oppose it, in keeping with the advice presented in 1 Peter 3:15, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” It turned into an occasion when the opponents of Christ got more entrenched in their false conviction that Christians are a dangerous threat to the harmony of our nation.

Sometimes when faced with opposition by human forces, we are finding Christians acting with the same attitude that they would if they were fighting demonic forces. They may attack people

when they should love them. Sadhu Sundar Singh was once proclaiming the gospel on the banks of the Ganges at a place called Rishi Kesh. Several Hindu Sadhus and other devotees were in his audience. One of them lifted up a handful of sand and threw it in his eyes. Others in the audience, however, were enraged by the act and handed the man to a policeman while Sundar Singh was washing the sand from his eyes. When he returned and found that the man had been handed over to the police, he begged for his release and, having secured it, proceeded with his preaching. The man, Vijayanada, was so surprised that he fell at Sundar Singh's feet, begging his forgiveness and declaring his desire to know more about what he was saying. Later this man joined Sundar Singh on his travels (Parker, 1918, pp. 25-26).

Hudson Taylor refused to take the compensation the Chinese government had agreed to pay after his missionaries and their property had been badly affected in the Boxer uprising. This decision resulted in the Chinese leaders extolling the virtues of Christ and his principles of tolerance (Glasser, 1975, p. 171). Taylor refused to win the battle for compensation. We are fighting a great war on behalf of the eternal kingdom of God. Therefore, we do not need to come out victors in all the relatively minor encounters we face along the path to victory. The meekness and gentleness of Christ may sometimes lead Christians to respond to battles in such a loving way that the world would consider it a defeat, a loss of face. Jesus said, "Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles" (Matt. 5:39-41). Many today would view these courses of action recommended by Jesus

as personal defeats involving a loss of face. But Christians are too big and their battle is too great for them to be bothered by these minor cases of a loss of face.

Sometimes Christians, convinced that the sovereign Lord of the universe has given them authority to worship him freely, may shout so loudly while praying that they disturb their neighbours. This has become a major problem in many poorer parts of the world, where church buildings are not air conditioned. Unnecessary opposition to the gospel has resulted.

The law of love operates alongside the laws of spiritual warfare. While Acts describes for us the way spiritual warfare was done, the Epistles describe for us how we should live responsible lives of love. Both these emphases are needed, and they are not mutually exclusive. In our emphasising the message of Acts in recent times, we may have neglected the message of the Epistles. Following Christ along the path of meekness and gentleness will require fresh reflection on how we should be sensitive to the concerns of our non-Christian neighbours. When we think of spiritual warfare, we must not only think of immediate victories and immediate answers to problems. We must not forget that the warfare passages in the Epistles usually imply hardship and strain. Paul said, "Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:3). This seems to be missing in some of the attitudes of triumph that we see today. I think these attitudes are getting dangerously close to triumphalism.

Servanthood and the Challenge From Pluralism and Fundamentalism

Today we are facing two great threats to evangelism in the form of pluralism and what is probably incorrectly called "fun-

damentalism.”¹¹ Pluralism claims that all religions are more or less equals in the universe of faiths. Fundamentalism presents exclusive claims, which cannot tolerate the idea of others trying to convert their own. They are strange bedfellows, as they seem to hold opposite views. But both share a common distaste for conversion.

Pluralism

Religious pluralism is found inside and outside the church both in the West and in so-called Third World countries, especially where there is a memory of a colonial past. Pluralists associate claims to the uniqueness of a faith with arrogance. Those who preach the exclusive claims of Christ are considered blind or insensitive to the rich religious heritage found outside the church. Pluralists say such an attitude is similar to the old colonialism, which had the underlying conviction that the culture of the colonial rulers was superior to that of the colonies. In this way, the colonial rulers justified their rule and the imposition of their customs and culture in the colonies.

When pluralists make this charge of arrogance against those who evangelise non-Christians, they are making the same mistake that opponents of Christ made in the first century. The first century Jews wanted a king, not a servant. Jesus was both. When they saw him as a servant, they rejected him, saying he could not be their king. Today in the post-colonial era, servanthood is “in,” and kingship and authority are “out of fashion.” So when we preach Christ as Lord, we are accused of

arrogance. We counter that biblical evangelism has the ideal balance of affirming the Lordship of Christ while adopting a servant lifestyle. Paul said, “For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor. 4:5).

If we present ourselves as servants among those we evangelise, then it will be difficult for them to oppose us. I have often wondered why Billy Graham is invited so often to the highly pluralist programme “Larry King Live,” which hosts psychic counsellors, those who talk to the dead, etc. It is clear from the way King talks to Graham that he is very fond of him. What I have seen from the times that I have seen Graham on this programme is that he gives the impression of being both humble and gentle in the way he speaks, even when he is talking about such difficult topics as heaven and hell.

Fundamentalism

If pluralism is embarrassed by the colonial past, fundamentalism is fearful of a repetition of the colonial past. In Sri Lanka we often hear statements like, “Earlier they came with the Bible in one hand and the gun in the other. Now they are coming with the Bible in one hand and dollars in the other. They are buying up the poor with their aid.” There is a lot of talk about “unethical conversion.” This is a very complex issue and is a huge challenge to the church. I think there is a desire to protect the authority of the religious establishment over their own people, an authority that is getting eroded through the conversion of some.

¹¹ Many of the distinctives of “fundamentalist” movements are not basic to the fundamental beliefs of these religions. For example, the intolerance of Buddhist fundamentalists is very contrary to the Buddhist ideal of tolerance. Therefore, it is argued that it is wrong to use the term fundamentalism for such movements (see Ramachandra, 1999, pp. 29-30). Ramachandra opts for words like Islamists and Hindutva to describe what we will call fundamentalists in this paper. We use the term “fundamentalist” because of what the word has come to connote to most people today, even though it may be improperly used.

I believe servanthood is a great antidote to these problems. If they see us as humble, unpretentious people, their hostility toward us is usually greatly reduced. I believe this is one reason why so many in India considered Mother Teresa a hero. She publicly expressed her opposition to the anti-conversion bill which fundamentalists were trying to introduce. She even joined in public processions protesting it. Yet she presented herself as a servant of the people.

The strong embarrassment among so many Hindus in India over the murder of the Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons was surely fuelled by the fact that the Staineses were servants of the people, working sacrificially among lepers. To add to that, there were the amazing expressions of Christ-like forgiveness by Mrs. Staines, which further commended the family to sincere people.

Even our big shows such as large evangelistic crusades can be a huge threat to non-Christians. They reason, "We don't have the money to organise that kind of programme. What chances have we against such power? We must stop them before they defeat us." I am not saying that we should not have big programmes, but that in some situations this type of programme may not be wise. But, more importantly, let our lives be simple and gentle. Let them see us as servants.¹²

Strength for servanthood

We must not forget that the strength to be servants comes from our understanding of the Lordship of Christ. We go with his authority. This is why just before giving the Great Commission he said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). The next verse starts (in the English translations) with

"therefore" (*oun*), and what follows is the Great Commission. Our freedom to go into the world with the gospel comes from the authority of Christ. This is also what gives us the strength to be servants of the people. Just before the record of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples, John makes a comment about Jesus' identity, which gave him the motivation to perform this lowly deed. He says, "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself" (John 13:3-4, NRSV).

Without our prior identity and security coming from the Lordship of Christ who sends us out in mission, we would be misfits in mission. We may get our identity from our work, resulting in numerous unhealthy patterns of ministry. We may feel angry and exploited by people as servanthood brings us down in society, and such descent needs a prior exaltation by Christ. We may be so insecure that we will act like "fundamentalists," overreacting to the obstacles that come our way. Therefore, in order to be servants of the people, we must first know the joy, the authority, and the security of being children and ambassadors of the king. This is what gives us strength for servanthood.

Fulfilment in Ministry

Dying for your people

We saw that an important aspect of Jesus' model of ministry is suffering. He died for his people, and he asks us to do the same. He said, "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you" (John 15:12). He then went on to explain what that love means: "Greater love has no one

¹² On the issue of servanthood as a response to pluralism and fundamentalism, see Fernando (2000).

than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (v. 13). Then he drives the message home by saying, "You are my friends if you do what I command" (v. 14). John 10 has an interesting sequence: Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (v. 11). Then he said, "The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep" (vv. 12-13). Those who, unwilling to die for their flock, run away in times of crisis are like hired hands: they care nothing for the sheep.

Many of today's reflections on ministerial fulfilment in the West have been taking ideas of job satisfaction and fulfilment from the world. According to these ideas, people should have ample opportunity to use gifts and to specialise in what they are good at. A good earthly remuneration in keeping with educational qualifications should be given. We deserve to be comfortable and to have the most efficient systems, so we can get our work done as quickly as possible. There is, however, not much reflection on the call to die.

This approach is causing havoc in many poorer countries. People are coming back after several years of study in the West and are expecting to have job satisfaction and rewards using measures from richer nations. The result is that many are living a life that is distant from the people. They don't really identify with them. Consequently, they cannot have a deep impact through their ministries. Given the lack of integrity that plagues our cultures, they are often taken for a ride by people who latch onto them with impure motives. Some are disillusioned because they seem to be so unfulfilled and underused. There-

fore they remain unhappy while serving, lacking the joy of the Lord that commends the way of Christ to the world. Many leave after a few years, feeling that they cannot really use their gifts properly in this setting. We desperately need ministerial reflection that bears in mind the dual truth that both Jesus and Paul were very joyous people while they also experienced deep suffering for their people.

Emotional pain and stress

Jesus and Paul were not only willing to die for the people; they also experienced much emotional pain because of their love for others and their call. When Jesus approached Jerusalem, he wept (Luke 19:41). In the garden he experienced tremendous anguish as he took the cup of the sins of the world—something which in his purity he hated with absolute hatred (Mark 14:33-34; Luke 22:42). While we would love to know the content of Jesus' prayers described in Hebrews 5:7, we cannot miss the sense of pain in his prayer life described there: "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission."

Paul vividly describes the intensity of his emotions as he agonised over the lostness of the Jews: "I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit—I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race" (Rom. 9:1-3). His description of his pain over the Galatians is even more vivid: "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!" (Gal. 4:19-20). He

lived with this type of thing daily. He says, “Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?” (2 Cor. 11:28-29).

In society in general in affluent nations, there has been a strong quest for comfort and convenience, and people have tried to eliminate stress and strain. Those suffering from stress and strain because of their work are asked to consider a change. They are told that perhaps they are in the wrong place or are doing something wrong. The result is that we have a generation of emotionally weak people who break their commitments like hired hands. When stress comes, they run away. They leave their spouses far too soon when serious problems arise. They leave difficult churches. They hop from organisation to organisation. They don’t have a theology of commitment and suffering which helps them face this challenge. They are too weak to practice the Christian ethic of commitment to people and tasks!

Society in general has redefined commitment into something that does not need to withstand stress and strain and cost. But the church is supposed to be different from the world, especially because we follow the Lord who showed such unswerving and costly commitment to us. But the same trends relating to the lack of commitment seem to be plaguing us too. Actually there isn’t much difference between the divorce statistics in the church and outside the church in some places.

Young people in the West often ask me what advice I have for them about how to prepare for missionary service. My answer to them is to stick to the group to which they belong, however difficult that may be! I tell them that when they go to the mission field, they are going to face great frus-

tration, and if they cannot face frustration at home properly, it is unlikely that they will face frustration in the field properly. They would likely move to some easier work which will take them away from their original call. I have a great fear that the West may be disqualifying itself from being a missionary sending region, because the Christians have gotten too soft. They have lost the art of sticking to their commitments.

Open-hearted ministry

Jesus and Paul hurt while ministering, because they adopted an open-hearted approach to ministry. Paul describes this type of ministry saying, “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us” (1 Thess. 2:8). The verb translated “loved you” (*homeiromai*) is a rare word meaning “to long for” or “yearn for.” Some older translations rendered it as “being affectionately desirous” (ASV). Paul goes on to say that they shared “not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.” The word translated “lives” (*psyche*) has the idea of “soul” or “inner being.” Paul yearned for people so much that he opened his inner being to them. He crossed from professionalism into yearning. Today we are warned not to get too close to our people, because we will hurt ourselves if we do. But to Jesus and Paul, hurt was an indispensable ingredient of ministry.

If we realise the indispensability of suffering to ministry, we will suffer less when we face suffering. Those who haven’t included this in their understanding of ministry will suffer more than they should when they encounter suffering. They will be regarding something normal as something wrong. They will be ashamed of something they should be proud of.

Lifestyle Issues

Choosing deprivation

It is well known that Jesus deprived himself of riches in order to bring us salvation. Paul says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). He “made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Phil. 2:7-8).

Today those who propagate prosperity theology state that Jesus took on the curse of poverty upon himself so that we do not need to take it on now. Therefore, some would even say that it is wrong for Christians to be poor. They say passages like those we quoted above do not apply to us. But both these passages present Jesus as an example for us to follow. Though Christ became a curse for us, we take up a cross when we follow him. His death does not exempt us from the cross. In fact, to be close to him we will need to suffer. Paul said, “Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church” (Col. 1:24). And this suffering is not something to be ashamed of. Paul rejoiced in it. Paul often boasted about his deprivation. Talking about things like not taking remuneration for his ministry, he said, “But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me. I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast” (1 Cor. 9:15). Recently in Sri Lanka a prosperity preacher from the West ridiculed Job, claiming that

he should not be regarded as a model for us today! That is clearly wrong!

Still a huge portion of the world’s population is poor and deprived. Recently the World Bank President, James Wolfensohn, stated that by 2025 about 4 billion people would live in poverty, that is, on less than \$2 a day. And of that group, 2 billion would live in absolute poverty.¹³ Those who live and work among the poor will also need to see what deprivation they need to take on in order to identify with the poor. Did not Paul say, “To the weak I became weak, to win the weak”? (1 Cor. 9:22a). We certainly cannot legislate here for anybody, but our passion for the gospel will cause us to make sacrifices. After talking about becoming weak, Paul goes on to say, “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings” (vv. 22b-23).

I believe this matter of poverty is very pertinent in this era where free enterprise and the market economy have brought prosperity into the open for all to see. This is taking place especially through advertising that is available to all in this media generation. Yet the percentage of poor people continues to grow and with it the level of discontent among a large mass of our people. I fear that many of our nations are heading for a Communist-type revolution by these disgruntled masses. At such times, a life of voluntary deprivation by Christian ministers could be a great asset in winning credibility. As the poor see the rich getting richer while they get poorer, and as their anger grows against the rich, it will be refreshing for them to see some people who could be better off who choose to deprive themselves in order to serve the poor.

¹³ From an AFP news report, September 1999.

Caution with partnerships

We should be careful about the lifestyle issue when we enter into partnerships between Christians from rich and poor nations. Partnership is certainly a good and necessary thing, and it is one of the heartening areas of growth in missions today. Many churches in richer nations honestly want equality with other Christians, and this is a key missionary motivation for partnership. Paul said, "Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality" (2 Cor. 8:13). Richer Christians feel bad that there is such a difference between their lifestyle and that of Christians from poorer nations. But when they come to our nations, they live in luxury hotels where a day's cost is about the monthly salary of a Christian worker. Unconsciously, the local leaders also get sucked into this lifestyle. And the guilty rich visitors feed this desire by suggesting that the locals need more conveniences. This is a powerful temptation, because we all like comfort and efficiency, and the simple lifestyle may be quite inefficient. If we succumb to this pressure, we will soon become distant from the people we are called to serve.

My father is a layman who has been active in the Evangelical Movement for a long time. He once told me that often a young evangelist goes to an unreached area and begins a good work of pioneering evangelism. This goes on for a time, until he comes in touch with a foreign sponsor who takes him on as "Our man in Sri Lanka." From that point on, the ministry goes downhill. The worldwide missionary movement, therefore, needs to do a lot of thinking about the whole issue of lifestyle and how that affects the way missionary partnerships work.

I will close this discussion of Jesus as a missionary model with the words of He-

brews 13:12-13: "And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore."

References

- Anderson, J. N. D. (1984). *Christianity and the world religions: The challenge of pluralism*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Bonda, J. (1998). *The one purpose of God: An answer to the doctrine of eternal punishment*. (R. Bruinsma, Trans.). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Crockett, W. E., & Sigountos, J. G. (Eds.). (1991). *Through no fault of their own: The fate of those who have never heard*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Fernando, A. (1983). *A universal homecoming?* Bombay: Gospel Literature Service.
- . (1989). *The Christian's attitude toward world religions*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- . (1994). *Crucial questions about hell*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- . (1995). *The supremacy of Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- . (2000). The uniqueness of Christ. In D. A. Carson (Ed.), *Telling the truth: Evangelizing postmoderns*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Froom, L. E. (1965-1966). *The conditionalist faith of our fathers*. (Vols. 1-2). Washington, DC: Herald & Review Publishing Association.
- Fudge, E. (1982). *The fire that consumes: A biblical and historical study of final punishment*. Houston, TX: Providential Press.
- Glasser, A. F. (1975). China. In D. E. Hoke (Ed.), *The church in Asia*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Harris, M. (1999). *Slave of Christ: A New Testament metaphor for total devotion to Christ*. Leicester, England: Apollos.
- Hick, J. (1976). *Death and eternal life*. London: Collins.
- . (1979). *Evil and the God of love*. Glasgow, Scotland: Collins, Fount Paperbacks.
- Newbigin, L. (1978). *The open secret: Sketches for a missionary theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

- Okholm, D. L., & Phillips, T. R. (Eds.). (1995). *More than one way? Four views of salvation in a pluralistic world*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Parker, Mrs. A. (1918). *Sadbu Sundar Singh: Called of God*. Madras, India: The Christian Literature Society.
- Pinnock, C. H. (1990). In C. H. Pinnock & D. Brown (Eds.), *Theological crossfire: An evangelical/liberal dialogue* (pp. 226-231). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Ramachandra, V. (1999). *Faiths in conflict? Christian integrity in a multicultural world*. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press.
- Robinson, J. A. T. (1968). *In the end God*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Shenk, C. (1997). *Who do you say that I am? Christians encounter other religions*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.
- Stott, J. R. W. (1988). In D. L. Edwards & J. R. W. Stott (Eds.), *Essentials: A liberal-evangelical dialogue* (pp. 327-329). London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Wenham, J. W. (1992). The case for conditional immortality. In N. M. de S. Cameron (Ed.), *Universalism and the doctrine of hell* (pp. 161-191). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Wright, C. (1997). *Thinking clearly about the uniqueness of Christ*. East Sussex, UK: Monarch.



Ajith Fernando has led Sri Lanka Youth for Christ since 1976. Convinced of a call to theologise from the grassroots, he has always led a small division in YFC and presently leads the work with drug dependents. His YFC responsibilities include teaching and pastoral care of staff. Ajith and his wife Nelun are active in the leadership of a Methodist church, most of whose members are converts from other religions. He has a Th.M. in New Testament from Fuller Theological Seminary. His nine books have been in the area of either Bible exposition, such as the **NIV Application Commentary: Acts** (Zondervan, 1998), or mission theology, such as **The Supremacy of Christ** (Crossway, 1995).



15

The Holy Spirit: the divine implementer of mission

AJITH
FERNANDO

WHEN WE THINK of the Holy Spirit, we usually think of him as the implementer on earth of the divine will. If so, when it comes to mission, the Holy Spirit would be the implementer of mission. The work of the Holy Spirit is as diverse as the work of the Trinity. So it will not be easy for us to summarise this in one study. Some elimination will have to take place as we look for emphases that are relevant for mission today. At the risk of oversimplification, we could say that the Gospels focus on the promise of the Spirit, Acts on the power of the Spirit in mission, and the Epistles of Paul on life in the Spirit. Owing to the limitations of this single study, I have decided to focus primarily on the Epistles of Paul. This is in keeping with my aim of looking to the teaching given in the Bible to the first century churches as a source of material for instructing today's young churches.

We can be thankful that the church has rediscovered the importance of the power of the Spirit for mission. She always believed it, but often in history she restricted the work of the Spirit to a limited number of activities. The phenomenal growth of the Charismatic Movement in the 20th century changed all of that. In fact, with the re-emphasis on previously neglected factors by the Charismatic Movement, she took on the designation of being "full gospel." Yet every movement in the history of the church has usually been deficient in some areas. So strictly speaking, only the Bible can claim to contain the full gospel. We are all striving towards fullness and are often made aware along our pilgrimage on earth of how far we fall short.

Some Important Emphases in Paul on the Holy Spirit

Let us, then, look at the teaching of Paul about the Holy Spirit, especially as it impacts our thinking about the mission of the church.¹ We find that many important themes and three major themes (in terms of frequency of occurrence) appear. We will first look at the important themes.

His place in the Godhead (43/46²)

The Holy Spirit's place in the Godhead is mentioned or implied 43 times covering 46 verses. 20 times he is referred to as the Spirit of God and three times as the Spirit of Christ. 15 times we are told that God gives the Spirit or works through him. Paul says that the Spirit knows the mind of God or God knows the mind of the Spirit (four times) and that the Spirit exalts Christ (five times).

The Spirit and truth (10/51)

In Jesus' farewell discourse in John, three times he refers to the Spirit as the Spirit of truth (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). Jesus promises that the Spirit will guide the disciples into all truth (16:13). The connection between the Spirit and truth is spelled out in Paul's Epistles 10 times covering a total of 51 verses (10/51). In 4/5 he is described as the agent of revelation (1 Cor. 2:13; Eph. 3:4-5; Eph. 6:17; 1 Tim. 4:1). 6/46 say that he shows or teaches us truth (1 Cor. 2:9-10, 12, 15, 16; 1 Cor. 12-14; Eph. 1:18). Included here are about 40 verses in 1 Corinthians 12-14 that describe gifts such as prophecy, words of wisdom and knowledge, and discerning between spirits.³ Some people call these gifts illumination, though until recently, at least in the circles in which I have moved, the so-called charismatic gifts were not included under illumination.

cerning between spirits.³ Some people call these gifts illumination, though until recently, at least in the circles in which I have moved, the so-called charismatic gifts were not included under illumination.

The Spirit and salvation (15/16)

So important is the Holy Spirit to salvation that Jesus described the act of salvation as being "born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Paul also shows this close link between salvation and the Holy Spirit (15/16). Here are some statistics: 2/2 list the Spirit's role in the central gospel events (Rom. 1:4; 1 Tim. 3:16). 2/2 speak of salvation or renewal through the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11; Tit. 3:5). 1/1 refers to baptism (in a soteriological sense) by one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). 5/6 acknowledge the Spirit as first fruits or deposit (Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30). In 4/4 the Spirit is received by believing (Gal. 3:2, 5, 14; 5:5). In 1/1 the Spirit is given to us at salvation (Tit. 3:5-6).

The Spirit gives power for mission and ministry (5/6)

The connection between mission and the power of the Spirit is a major theme in Acts. But in Paul I could find only five references (six verses). Of these five occurrences, three are summary statements about Paul's ministry among his readers (Rom. 15:18-19; 1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Thess. 1:5). The other two refer to the work of the Spirit in pastoral situations: Those who have received the Spirit are to gently restore those caught in a sin (Gal. 6:1, NRSV). Timothy must guard the good deposit entrusted to him with the help of the Holy

¹ The definitive treatment on Paul and the Holy Spirit is Fee (1994).

² Here we are following the convention used throughout the series which presents the instances a theme occurs (43 in this case) and then the total number of verses covered, taking into account all these instances (46). So 43 instances and 46 verses will be represented as 43/46.

³ We have not included the other passages in Paul about spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 4:9-13), as they do not refer to the Holy Spirit in connection with the gifts.

Spirit (2 Tim. 1:14). In the economy of God's revelation to humankind, the role of the Spirit in empowering mission was covered in the book of Acts. Its relatively low occurrence in Paul should not cause us to neglect it, as an earlier generation of Evangelicals may have done. They looked mainly to Paul for their theology and neglected the Gospels and Acts as sources of theology. Thankfully this attitude is rapidly diminishing in the church.

The Charismatic Movement has focussed much attention on the abiding teachings that can come from Acts.⁴ In the 20th century, biblical scholarship began to pay much more attention to the theology contained in the Gospels and Acts. This was emphasised more by non-Evangelical scholars of the church.⁵ But recently Evangelicals have also found that looking for theological teaching is an important part of studying the Gospels and Acts.⁶ They have, however, done so without sacrificing their belief in the historical reliability of these New Testament books, which is what many of the non-Evangelical scholars did. The result of this is that now we are looking more at the theology of Luke and therefore at the theology of the Holy Spirit. In this process, the church seems to have recovered the missionary character of the Holy Spirit.

Right at the start of Acts, Jesus showed the priority of the Spirit for missions when he commanded the apostles, "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father

promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4-5). In this first chapter, he also explained why the Holy Spirit is so important for mission. He gives us power for the work of witness (1:8). David Bosch (1991, p. 115) has shown how the relationship between the Holy Spirit and mission was a factor that was neglected in the history of the church. He says, "By the second century A.D. the emphasis shifted almost exclusively to the Spirit as the agent of sanctification or as the guarantor of apostolicity." Bosch says that the "Protestant Reformation of the 16th century tended to put the major emphasis on the work of the Spirit as bearing witness to and interpreting the Word of God." Bosch says that it was only in the 20th century that there was "a rediscovery of the intrinsic missionary character of the Holy Spirit." He says this came about "because of a renewed study of the writings of Luke." One of the pioneers here was Roland Allen, whose book, *Pentecost and the World: A Revelation of the Holy Spirit in the "Acts of the Apostles,"* appeared in 1917.⁷

Yet my focus is on Paul. And Paul does not say as much on the Holy Spirit as he does about God, Jesus, and the church. Gordon Fee (1994), through his magisterial book on the Holy Spirit in Paul, *God's Empowering Presence*, has shown that Paul does have a much more important

⁴ See the scholarly study of Stronstad (1994).

⁵ See, for example, Haenchen (1971). When the first edition of F. F. Bruce's commentary on the Greek text of Acts appeared in 1951 (Bruce, 1951), it was criticised by liberal scholars for its lack of theological content and described as the product of the humanity school of Aberdeen University. In the third edition of this book (Bruce, 1990, p. xvi), Bruce said that he esteemed this description as a high honour and expressed his debt to the great archaeologist and historian Sir William Ramsey.

⁶ One of the earliest examples of this trend was Marshall (1970). More recent studies include Dollar (1996) and Keener (1997).

⁷ This work is reprinted in Allen (1962, pp. 1-61).

theology of the Holy Spirit than Christians usually think.⁸ However, I will not give as much emphasis to the power which the Holy Spirit gives for mission as it deserves,⁹ owing to the need to be selective in the choice of subjects, given the limitations of this study. Besides, I feel that this is a doctrine that the church has rediscovered and that this has been well covered in several works¹⁰ and in the practice of many churches.

There is, however, one issue related to the topic of the Holy Spirit empowering us for mission that I will address here because of its contemporary relevance. When the church appointed “relief workers” to distribute food to needy Christians, the two requirements for selection were the need to be filled with the Spirit and the need to be filled with wisdom (Acts 6:3). If we were to follow this pattern today, then we should be looking for the fullness of the Spirit and wisdom when appointing people to things like building committees, social service projects, and other tasks in the church. Usually we do not falter on the wisdom requirement, but on the spiritual requirement we often lower our standards because these are considered supposedly non-spiritual activities. Acts 6 shows that it is wrong, in the programme of the church, to distinguish between spiritual and non-spiritual activities in this way. All activities in the church’s programme are spiritual and require spiritual people to be involved in their leadership.

This principle becomes very complex when Christian relief organisations are

structured in a way that they must hire non-Christians on their staff because of government regulations. I have found that even when this is not a requirement, Christian relief organisations get very lax in the way they look for spiritual qualifications of those they hire. This is inexcusable! Often organisations that claim to be committed to holistic ministry do not hire holistic workers—those filled with both wisdom and the Spirit.

But sometimes government regulations require the hiring of non-Christians in Christian social agencies. This has happened in hospitals in countries like Nepal, where missionaries are not permitted to do evangelism and where there are strict policies about conversion of non-Christians. These organisations will need to do some really hard thinking to ensure that people filled with the Spirit influence the direction of the movement. This is an issue that Christian relief organisations need to constantly keep before them today. Perhaps something can be learned from mission groups in countries like Nepal, which have grappled with this issue for a long time. I fear that often it is tucked away into a safe place where it will not cause much discomfort to the pragmatically oriented hiring practices of many organisations.

While the subjects discussed above are important, they are not major emphases in Paul. When we consider the frequency of occurrence, we find three major emphases relating to the ministry of the Spirit in Paul: the Spirit as our companion and help, spiritual gifts, and holiness and the fruit of the Spirit.

⁸ See also Turner (1996, pp. 103-135). Also, Carson (1987) is a superb study of one of the most important passages in Paul about the Holy Spirit.

⁹ See Fernando (1998) for more complete treatment of this subject.

¹⁰ In addition to the books cited so far, I have found the following books especially helpful: Deere (1993), Green (1975), Keener (1996), Kinlaw (1985), and Sargent (1994).

The Spirit as Our Companion and Help (32/38)

Jesus described the Holy Spirit as the *paraklētos* (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), which has been translated as “counselor” (NIV), “helper” (NAS), or “advocate” (NRSV). Though Paul does not use the word *paraklētos* in the Epistles, his various descriptions about the Holy Spirit being our companion and helper provide a vivid commentary of this role.¹¹ Six times (covering seven verses) Paul simply says that we are given the Spirit. In 7/8 he says that the Holy Spirit lives in us and with us. Of these references, three times the word *oikeō*, meaning to come and take residence as in a house, is used of this activity of the Spirit (Rom. 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 3:16). The beloved benediction at the end of 2 Corinthians refers to the fellowship (*koinōnia*) of the Holy Spirit (13:14). His ministries of leading us and guiding our actions and speech particularly show his role as our helper (3/3; Rom. 8:14; 1 Cor. 12:3; Gal. 5:18). So is his ministry as the giver of life and of power to live the Christian life (7/9).¹²

The enabling of the Spirit to live the Christian life is one of the key arguments that we present for the uniqueness of Christ. We say that all religions teach us to do good, but that Christianity gives us the ability to live up to the principles of our religion. It does that by giving us the Holy Spirit as our helper so that, with his help, we can do what we otherwise could not do. The challenge for us today is to get our act together! People like Mahatma Gandhi accused Christianity, with its doctrine of unmerited forgiveness for sin, of

opening the door to moral licence. He would point to examples of people who sinned boldly while claiming to be saved, because they were assured of forgiveness from God. We know that this is a distortion of the biblical doctrine of free grace, that those who have truly received Christ's salvation could not go on sinning in the way Gandhi said they did (1 John 2:1; 3:6, 9). Yet it is up to us to show a watching and sceptical world that Christianity does indeed work to change sinners into righteous people.¹³

The confidence we have as Christians is also through the ministry of the Spirit in our lives. Traditionally when speaking of the assurance of salvation, we have focussed almost exclusively on the passages of Scripture that say that those who have believed have been saved (John 1:12; 5:24; 6:37, etc.). This is indeed the basic means by which we can be assured of our standing in Christ. But the Bible also tells us that the Spirit has a direct ministry in our lives through which he gives us this assurance. Once we are told that the Spirit gives us hope (Rom. 15:13). The Spirit witnesses to us about our position in Christ (3/5; Rom. 8:15-16; 9:1-2; Gal. 5:5). Romans 8:15-16 is particularly clear about this: “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘*Abba*, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” It is true that the primary way in which the Spirit does this is through the Scriptures. But there is a subjective element here too, where we could say that God has touched us and ministered to us individually through his Spirit.

¹¹ 1 John 2:1 uses this word for Jesus, referring to his ministry as our advocate when we sin.

¹² Rom. 8:6, 12-13; 15:13; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 3:16-17; Phil. 1:19; 2 Tim. 1:14.

¹³ For a fuller response to Gandhi's criticism, see Fernando (2000) and Fernando (1998, chap. 12).

This particular ministry of the Spirit is extremely relevant today for missions. I have often had the sad experience of meeting many Christian workers who are bitter and angry with the way that they have been treated by others, especially by the churches or institutions with which they have been associated and by the very people they have sacrificially served. We all know how hard rejection is to those who have made it their goal to love everyone they encounter and to be honourable in their dealings with them. This can make good people bitter. The best antidote to rejection on earth is acceptance in heaven. After G. Campbell Morgan learned that he was rejected as a candidate for the Methodist ministry, following a poor showing at his “trial sermon,” he sent a telegram to his father with one word, “Rejected.” The father promptly responded with a telegram that contained the words, “Rejected on earth. Accepted in heaven. Dad” (Morgan, 1972, p. 60).

Sometimes through the Holy Spirit God gives us a clear impression of the fact that we belong to him. Paul describes this as the witness of the Spirit to our spirit (Rom. 8:16). The joy of knowing that God has ministered to us in this way does so much to take away the bitterness of the rejection of people. The sorrow of it may remain, because we love the people who have rejected us, but the Spirit’s ministry to us helps take away the despair and bitterness. Paul demonstrates this in 2 Corinthians, a book that exults in the glory of the ministry. It was written after some painful experiences, but the joy of God’s ministry to him had helped replace the pain with joy. Here is how he describes God’s ministry of comfort in the painful experience that he had: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in

any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Cor. 1:3-4). Experiencing the joy of such experiences of the Spirit’s witness is, I believe, essential for remaining happy in the work of the Lord.

Four times Paul describes the Spirit’s involvement in our worship, prayers, and intercession (Rom. 8:26, 27; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 3:3). These verses show us how important it is to ensure that the Holy Spirit is given ample opportunity to influence and direct our worship activities. The first of these references has a beautiful wording: “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Rom. 8:26). That simple English word “helps” translates a double compound in the Greek, *sunantilambanetai*. It literally means, “to take share in.” The idea is that the Holy Spirit fully identifies with us in our weakness by coming alongside us and taking his share of our burden. Here is another reason for rejoicing and confidence in ministry. Often our weaknesses become huge burdens to us. Sometimes we deny them and go through a complex process to hide them. This can hurt our effectiveness by hindering the closeness with which we relate to those among whom we minister. Once we know that the Holy Spirit is sharing the weakness with us, we do not need to set off on an elaborate process of denying the reality of our weaknesses. The result is that our effectiveness in ministry is increased.

We can be grateful that the church has rediscovered this ministry of the Holy Spirit that involves his constant, daily companionship with us. Around this fact is built the biblical understanding of spirituality. A strong rational bent seems to have restricted Protestant Christianity in the West to giving a relatively lower emphasis to spirituality. Earlier, to many

Evangelicals, Christianity was simply giving mental assent to facts about the work of Christ, followed by rugged obedience along the path of obedience. The personal, subjective experience of God through his Spirit was largely neglected. The rediscovery of tangible spiritual experiences came through various movements, such as the Wesleyan Holiness Movement, the Quakers, and more recently the Charismatic Movement. We are reminded of the reaction to a dry, rational approach to life, which caused the revolt against modernism, giving rise to post-modernism. A similar thing seems to be happening with the dry, rational attitude to truth that was found in many branches of Evangelicalism. People have taken a much greater interest in spirituality.

Recently Evangelicals have moved in different directions as they have looked for more vital experiences of spirituality. Firstly, some have moved to the more liturgical traditions, such as Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism, and Orthodoxy. Secondly, others have rediscovered the *charismata* afresh, and the Charismatic Movement has swept the globe with breathtaking force. While at one time the Charismatic Movement was considered by many to be a fringe group within Evangelicalism, today it is a vital part of mainstream Christianity, and its influence upon all segments of Christianity has been profound. Within this movement, spiritual gifts that illustrate the helping ministry of the Holy Spirit, such as prophecy and knowledge, are commonplace (see Deere, 1993, 1996).

The third direction that I will mention is from within traditional Evangelicalism, where there has been a new focus on the spiritual disciplines of meditation, prayer,

and fasting. The popularity of the writings of James Houston (1989, 1990), Eugene Peterson (1996, pp. 107-111), Richard Foster (1989), Peter Toon (1987, 1991), and Dallas Willard (1988, 1998) is evidence of this encouraging trend in the Evangelical Movement. In an earlier generation, A. W. Tozer (1948, 1963, 1985) made the Evangelical Movement in the West aware of the need for fresh thinking about spirituality. Influencing this whole movement have been Catholic writers like Henri Nouwen and Thomas Merton. From a Reformed perspective, John Piper (1986, 1995, 1997a, 1997b) has been stressing the spiritual disciplines through his writings, which are rich in biblical, theological, and devotional content. Piper is following in the steps of his mentor, the great 18th century American theologian Jonathan Edwards, who was a great exponent of the experiential aspects of Christianity.¹⁴ Another Reformed preacher/scholar to press home the importance of experiencing God in this way was D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1984, 1992; see also Eaton, 1989).

Perhaps the highly rational orientation of Western society may have hindered the growth of a vibrant experience of the Holy Spirit among Western Evangelicals in the modern era. But Asian Christianity has a noble tradition of spirituality during the same period. Sadhu Sundar Singh of India testified to what we would today call mystical experiences of God that directly and literally illustrate the promise that the Holy Spirit will lead and guide God's children (Appasamy, 1966; Sundar Singh, 1989). As a young man, Watchman Nee of China wrote a three-volume work on sanctification, *The Spiritual Man*, and he spent almost 20 of his mature years in prison. He was a master of the spiritual life, as his

¹⁴ See his book, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, which is now available in various contemporary editions. This book and two other relevant books, *Narrative of Surprising Conversions* and *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England*, are found in Edwards (1974).

numerous, still-popular books show. American missionary to India E. Stanley Jones (1968) made his unique brand of Indian spirituality known in the West through his writings and the Ashram Movement that he founded. While I am not too familiar with African, Caribbean, and Latin American Christianity, it is my understanding that they too have always had a place for the immediacy of the Spirit in Christian experience.

So we can say that there is a greater emphasis than before on experiencing the Spirit within the Evangelical Movement in the West. More and more people are talking about how he speaks to us and how he intervenes in our lives (sometimes miraculously), showing us his will for us, warning us of challenges we face, and promising us of his provision for needs that we face. Of course, there has been some abuse of this aspect, with people making outlandish claims of what God has said to them. We find situations of people who are claiming that God has promised them a thing that was a deep wish of theirs, without any real evidence that God has spoken to them. This is like the young man who told a girl that God had told him that he should marry her. She promptly replied that God had told her no such thing! But this tendency is to be expected with all types of special spiritual phenomena: excesses always accompany the genuine experience.

The significance for mission of this trend towards experiencing the reality of God is immense. Millions are coming to Christ, attracted by the possibility of experiencing the power and love of God in tangible ways in their personal lives.

Spiritual Gifts (37/140)

Spiritual gifts are mentioned several times in Paul's Epistles (37/140). The key passage I have considered is 1 Corinthians

12–14. The other two gifts passages (Rom. 12:6–8; Eph. 4:7–13) are not associated with the Holy Spirit and therefore, though significant, were not accounted for in my counting of verses. The Ephesians passage clearly states that it is Christ who gives the gifts (vv. 7–8), though we know that today Christ's blessings to us are given through the Holy Spirit.

In both the Romans and Corinthians passages on the gifts, the focus is on the unity of the body and how the gifts help preserve and establish that unity in practice. The Romans passage is prefaced with these words: "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Rom. 12:4–5). Then Paul says, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us" (v. 6). After that is the listing of gifts (vv. 7–8). The Ephesians passage ends with the words, "... until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). The connection to unity is clear.

The Corinthians passage (1 Cor. 12–14) was written in response to questions asked by the church there about the operation of the gifts in the church. Again we see that the focus was not on the gifts themselves but on how the gifts should operate in the body. Unlike the Romans and Ephesians passages, this passage clearly connects gifts with the Holy Spirit. Chapter 12 focuses on the fact that all are of equal importance despite having different gifts. Chapter 13 focuses on the fact that love is much more important than all the gifts. And chapter 14 gives instructions on how the gifts should operate when the body comes together. It has warnings about misuse and instructions about what

is permissible when the community is together. The key to understanding this chapter is the *oikodomeō* word group, which carries the idea of building up. These words appear seven times in 1 Corinthians 14 and are translated as “strengthen,” “edify,” and “build up.”¹⁵ Paul is saying that when people exercise gifts in a gathering of the church, they must ensure that others are edified.

So the focus of the gifts passages is not purely on gifts but on how they should be regulated and on how they should mirror and foster Christian unity. This does not give us authority to downplay the importance of gifts, especially the so-called charismatic gifts, like tongues and prophecy. The Acts of the Apostles gives these gifts an important place and does not even hint that they were undesirable for the church’s health. Acts was certainly written after Romans and 1 Corinthians and, most probably, after Ephesians too. Paul was Luke’s close friend, and Luke would have known the mind of Paul about these gifts. Yet he presents them in a very positive light.

The oft-repeated statement that we must avoid the two extremes of charismania and charisphobia is appropriate here. These two extremes are expressed in two types of sermons that could be preached from 1 Corinthians 14. One type will take a statement like, “He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself” (v. 4), to argue that speaking in tongues is absolutely necessary for the edification of all Christians. In the context, of course, Paul is talking about how prophecy is more desirable than tongues in public worship. The verse goes on to say, “... but he who prophesies edifies the church.” The thrust of the verse, then, is in a different direction. The second extreme position is expressed in the

type of sermon that focuses almost entirely on the wrong uses of tongues mentioned in this passage, leaving the hearer with a distinct sense that tongues is an undesirable gift that does more harm than good!

It would be instructive to mention two important verses in Paul on how we can stifle the work of the Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 says, “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire.” The next verse says, “Do not treat prophecies with contempt” (v. 20). So, according to this passage, the way to put out the Spirit’s fire is to treat prophecies with contempt. This is a sobering verse that should cause us to be cautious about unguarded criticism about the prophecies that are being made these days. Of course, the next verse says, “Test everything” (v. 21). If a statement that purports to be a prophecy contradicts what is clearly taught in the Scriptures, it must be shown to be wrong. But we must be careful about treating prophecies with contempt, a thing that we often find sophisticated Evangelicals doing.

The other verse about stifling the Spirit has another emphasis. Ephesians 4:30 says, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” The context shows that the way we can grieve the Holy Spirit is by unholy living. Verse 31 asks us to turn from unholy living: “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.” Verse 32 presents the positive side of holiness: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” So we can stifle the Spirit by stifling gifts or by living unholy lives. This brings us to the third major emphasis of Paul regarding the Holy Spirit.

¹⁵ 1 Cor. 14:3, 4, 5, 12, 17, 26.

Holiness and the Fruit of the Spirit (59/81)

When we look at the frequency of occurrence of the theme of holiness/godliness and its relation to the work of the Holy Spirit, it becomes clear that this is the function of the Holy Spirit that Paul wants to highlight most in his Epistles. I am using the words “holiness” and “godliness” here in a broad sense to refer to what we might call Christian character or Christ-likeness.

The ability to be holy

Paul stresses some key ideas relating to the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of holiness. He summarises the Christian life as living in or according to the Spirit (6/6; Rom. 8:4, 5, 6, 9, Gal. 5:16, 25). 11 times (covering 14 verses) he refers to the inner work the Spirit does in us in contrast to the law. Romans 2:29 is representative: “No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.”

Even more frequent are Paul’s affirmations that the Spirit helps release the hold of sin or the flesh over us and helps make us godly (17/25). Paul’s classic statement in Romans 8:2 summarises this teaching well: “... through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”¹⁶ The next two verses show that this is something we cannot do in our natural state: “For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that

the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit” (vv. 3-4).

Considering the crisis of godliness in the church today, this group of texts should be regarded as being of vital importance to us. We must show Christians that holiness is a work of the Spirit, who does in us what we in our natural state cannot do. I believe the church should bring this truth to the forefront of Christian conversation and teaching. If Christians believe that it is possible for them to be holy, then half the battle for holiness is won. They will not give up this quest for godliness as futile; neither will they neglect it as unimportant. Instead, believing in God’s ability to change them, they would aspire to godliness and use whatever means God gives towards helping them achieve this goal.

Another major theme is that the Spirit is the giver of love and the other fruit of the Spirit (17/27).¹⁷ A key text here is Romans 5:5, “... God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”¹⁸ Though the Spirit is not mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13, we have included it in our study of the Spirit for the following reasons: First, the chapter is sandwiched between two parts of Paul’s treatment of the gifts of the Spirit. Second, verses 1-3 are describing the insufficiency of what Paul has described as gifts of the Spirit in chapter 12. Third, the Spirit is described several times in Paul as the giver of love.¹⁹ And fourth, love is mentioned first in the listing of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. So when

¹⁶ Other key references here include Rom. 8:12-13; 2 Cor. 3:3; Gal. 5:5, 16, 24.

¹⁷ Included in this list is 1 Cor. 12:31-14:1, the 15 verses of which I have divided into 6 references.

¹⁸ Other key references here include Rom. 8:6; 15:13, 30; 1 Cor. 12:21-14:1; 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; 1 Thess. 1:6.

¹⁹ Rom. 5:5; 15:30; 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Col. 1:8.

we think of the Spirit, we must think of love and the other fruit of the Spirit. This emphasis is summarised well in a verse from Samuel Longfellow's hymn, "Holy Spirit, Truth Divine":

Holy Spirit, love divine,
Glow within this heart of mine;
Kindle every high desire;
Perish self in thy pure fire.

The need for a fresh emphasis

If our statistical survey is to guide us in what we should emphasise today when talking about the Holy Spirit, then holiness and the fruit of the Spirit should be given a very high place. In the study on God, I mentioned that 1,400 of Paul's 2,005 verses are connected with the call to be holy/godly. This is about 70% of the verses in his Epistles. I suggested that this could be the most important theme in the Epistles.

Yet I believe I am right in saying that today, when we talk about the Holy Spirit, it is generally not in connection with godliness. The focus is on power for ministry and for the exercise of gifts. As we saw, this is not a key emphasis in Paul's teaching. There is a conspicuous absence of emphasis on power for ministry and technique in ministry in Paul. It is conspicuous because there is so much teaching on these aspects today. Because of this and because of the crisis of godliness in the church today, I have decided to include an extended discussion on this here.

We repeat that Acts has given us ample evidence on how important the exercise of the miraculous gifts is for evangelism. God used tongues, signs, and wonders to open the door for the preaching of the gospel. Yet Paul is writing to people who

have responded to the evangelistic message and who belong to the church. Like today, many of them were attracted to Christ through the exercise of power—a fact which Paul mentions in the Epistles (Rom. 15:18-19; 1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Thess. 1:5). For such people, there should be a high emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the One who enables godly living. To this we add what we discussed in the study on God about the need to supplement the almost magical view of God which people have with the emphasis on the sovereignty and holiness of God.

Throughout the modern era, God raised up reform or revival movements in the history of the church to give greater emphasis to holiness. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Puritans played a big part in renewing the church in the English-speaking world, and their writings continue to influence the church.²⁰ The works of John Bunyan (1628–1688), Richard Baxter (1615–1691), and John Owen (1616–1683), for example, still remain very popular. In the 18th century, Pietism, which gave a high place to holy living, played an influential role in Continental Europe. John Wesley (1703–1791) was greatly influenced by the Pietists, especially by the Moravians and their founder Count Nikolaus Von Zinzendorf (1700–1760). Wesley emphasised the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit with a focus on holiness and love, and he used words like "perfect love" or "full sanctification" to describe what he regarded as the desired standard of holiness for Christians (Wesley, 1998 reprint). Because of this emphasis, a segment of the Wesleyan Movement in America was called the Holiness Movement.²¹ The so-called "Keswick Theology"

²⁰ See Packer (1990) and Ryken (1986).

²¹ For a brief introduction to Wesley's theology of sanctification, see Coleman (1990, pp. 79-97) and Dieter (1987). For a more comprehensive study, see Wynkoop (1972), Greenlee (1994), and Wood (1980).

also placed emphasis on holiness, focusing more on the victorious Christian life and urging people to completely abandon their lives to the rule of God.²² These two movements influenced many leading 19th and 20th century Evangelical leaders in the English-speaking West, including D. L. Moody, F. B. Meyer, Andrew Murray, and W. H. Griffith Thomas, who gave emphasis to the fullness of the Spirit and to the fact that this results in holiness and service.²³ The American Holiness Movement is said to be the parent of the modern Pentecostal Movement.²⁴ They took the Wesleyan emphasis on the Holy Spirit and on a second definite work of grace after initial salvation, but they focussed more on the so-called charismatic gifts.

In the book *Five Views on Sanctification* (Dieter, 1987), Melvin E. Dieter describes the Wesleyan position, Anthony A. Hoekema the Reformed position, Stanley M. Horton the Pentecostal position, J. Robertson McQuilkin the Keswick position, and John F. Walvoord the Augustinian-Dispensational position. Commenting on this book, Robert E. Coleman (1990, p. 96, n. 13) says, "While the distinctives of each position are defended, it is interesting how these major schools of thought coalesce around the necessity of Christians living a holy life." Permit me to express a heart cry that once more God would raise movements in the church that will focus on the priority of holiness.

Sensuality in ministry

Recently we have seen a sensuality that has become part of what is now being called "power ministry." There is a lot of touching and laying hands on people. Yet we know how easy it is for this to get out

of hand. This area is posing such a big problem to the cause of mission in our part of the world that I thought that it would be good to consider it as part of our discussion on holiness and the Holy Spirit.

We have recently had far too many instances of male ministers laying hands on women in the wrong places. Besides, powerful male ministers are becoming like the Gurus of Hinduism. They are looked up to with awe by female disciples. The minister can enjoy this position of power too much. Often—in church and society—strong leaders are insecure people whose insecurity has made them driven and ambitious people. These qualities have brought them to the top of the leadership of the church. This position can be a great testimony to the grace of God. But it can also be very dangerous, because it makes them vulnerable to temptations that they will find difficult to handle. One such temptation is the adoration of female disciples. The leaders may enjoy too much the power they have over these disciples. They may begin to do things that extend their control over these disciples. As they get bolder and bolder, they begin to cross more frontiers of control. Usually the last frontier to be crossed is the sexual one. A friendly touch or hug from the father figure is accepted with gratitude by the female disciple. But soon the expressions of concern get more physical, and great damage is done as trust is betrayed and the disciple is violated.

Churches that emphasise the ministry of the Spirit too are not immune to this problem. Yet, one of the key answers to victory over this temptation is Paul's doctrine of sanctification by the Spirit. We put

²² See the treatment of the Keswick View in Dieter (1987).

²³ See Clouse, Pierard, & Yamauchi (1993, p. 527).

²⁴ See Dayton (1987) and Clouse, Pierard, & Yamauchi (1993, pp. 527-528).

to death the deeds of the body by the power of the Spirit. Paul explains this in Romans 8:12-13. First he presents the problem: “Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die....” Then he presents the answer: “... but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.”

This passage shows that there are two keys to victory. First, Christians must be skilled in the principle of daily crucifying of the flesh; daily we are saying “No” to the prompting of our sinful nature. Second, we do this by the power of the Spirit. This point gives us the assurance of victory. The first point, however, shows us that we also have a part to play along the path to victory. The spiritual muscles that enable us to “put to death the misdeeds of the body” must be kept trim and fit for the big temptations. And the only way we can do this is by constant practice.

Leaders sometimes don’t get an opportunity to keep spiritually fit in this way. They get everything they want. They came to the top through rugged discipline and endurance against great odds. If we were to look at this climb to the top in another way, we could say that they were determined people who were able somehow to achieve the things they wanted to achieve. People admire them for their courage and determination. But even they have to learn the discipline of crucifying the flesh. This explains the strange phenomenon of leaders who are determined and disciplined falling into sexual sin. Their determination got them to the top of the ecclesiastical ladder. But when they experienced temptation to sinful sexual gratification, they were not skilled in resisting. The temptation became desire,

and they used their skills in achieving what they wanted to achieve, in order to win the sexual prize they desired.

The Christian community may need to help leaders by confronting them when the uncrucified self is manifested. Hebrews 10:24 describes this action: “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” The best people to do this are close colleagues and family members, especially spouses. Leaders should be spiritually accountable to such people. Unfortunately, often leaders have ascended so high in the ecclesiastical ladder that they are not accountable to anyone. Colleagues are reluctant to confront them because they are God’s chosen leaders with miraculous gifts and spiritual power and authority. They are placed precariously on top of the ladder, with no one to help them avoid moral lapses. Our point is that a frank and open community life will help leaders stay spiritually trim so that they can handle the big temptations victoriously.

How then can we account for the common phenomenon of powerful preachers who continue to minister in the miraculous while their life is stained by serious immorality? Their ministries give evidence of the power of the Spirit, but their personal lives do not give evidence of the holiness of the Spirit. It seems as if the power of Acts can exist independently even when the holiness of the Epistles is missing, though it is one and the same Spirit who is responsible for both.²⁵

I can think of three things to say about this anomalous situation. First, the Bible accepts (without condoning it) that it is possible for miracle workers who are not holy to exist in the Christian community. Samson is a classic example of this. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 has people exercis-

²⁵ Of course, Acts also does uphold holiness, as the story of Ananias and Sapphira makes clear.

ing some “powerful” gifts while still not having love—the most important feature of holiness. In Matthew 7:21-22 Jesus talks of people who did not do the will of God, who will say at the judgement: “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?” Jesus’ answer to such is, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!”

Second, from the existence of people with this discrepancy between life and ministry, we can infer that while the holiness of some people may leave them owing to sin, their gifts may not leave them immediately. Is this because the gifts have become so much a part of them that it takes some time before the gifts leave them? Or are these sinful miracle workers performing miracles through the power of Satan, who looks forward with great relish to the day when this person will be exposed? These are questions that I find difficult to answer. But this we can say without a doubt: one day in this world or the next these people will be exposed for who they really are. As Moses said, “... you may be sure that your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23). Perhaps they will be like Samson who “awoke from his sleep and thought, ‘I’ll go out as before and shake myself free.’ But he did not know that the Lord had left him” (Judges 16:20). He had been living in sin for some time before the power of God left him.

Third, the Scriptures consider as deadly serious the situation of a discrepancy between personal life and public ministry. We have already seen how Jesus said these people will be punished (Matt. 7:21-22). Those who have a public role in the life of the church will be judged more severely if they do not practice what they preach. James says, “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly” (James 3:1).

Those who live in this state may think that because it looks as if God is using them, things are all right. This way they do not have the motivation to turn from sin and subject themselves to the cleansing discipline of the church. But that is a misperception! They may be spared from judgement now, but a severe punishment awaits them someday! When Scripture was being written, God showed once for all how he felt about what Peter calls lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3). Ananias and Sapphira were killed on the spot! This Spirit is holy, and it is a fearful thing to violate his standards of holiness.

Conclusion

Let me summarise the thrust of this study. As we think of the Holy Spirit and mission, the first thing that comes to mind is the power to do ministry that the Spirit gives. We are grateful that the church has rediscovered this emphasis. Not only does the Spirit empower us for mission, but he also gives us gifts that we can use in mission, and he remains with us, banishing loneliness, ministering to our personal needs, and comforting us in times of crisis. Because of the Spirit’s ministry, we can avoid the pitfalls of ministry, such as burn-out and bitterness.

But all the blessings of God’s equipping and empowering us for ministry could be negated if the other aspect of the Spirit’s work is neglected: he makes us holy. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 gives us the boldness to affirm that while power is important, purity is more important. The force of the power exhibited in ministry could blind us from seeing the importance of purity, and this seems to be happening today.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to re-emphasise the purity aspect of the Spirit’s work. This was something our spiritual forefathers knew a lot about,

though some of them tended to restrict the power aspect. Therefore, we would do well to sit at the feet of our spiritual parents to rediscover their teaching on holiness. But more importantly, let us sit at the feet of Paul, that great miracle worker and apologist, who was also a preacher of holiness.

References

- Allen, R. (1962). *The ministry of the Spirit* (D. M. Paton, Ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Appasamy, A. J. (1966). *Sundar Singh: A biography*. Madras, India: Christian Literature Society.
- Bosch, D. J. (1991). *Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Bruce, F. F. (1951). *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek text with introduction and commentary*. London: The Tyndale Press.
- . (1990). *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek text with introduction and commentary* (3rd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Carson, D. A. (1987). *Showing the Spirit: A theological exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Clouse, R. G., Pierard, R. W., & Yamauchi, E. M. (1993). *Two kingdoms: The church and culture through the ages*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Coleman, R. E. (1990). "Nothing to do but save souls": John Wesley's charge to his preachers. Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan Publishing House.
- Dayton, D. W. (1987). *Theological roots of Pentecostalism*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Deere, J. (1993). *Surprised by the power of the Spirit: Discovering how God speaks and heals today*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- . (1996). *Surprised by the voice of God: How God speaks today through prophecies, dreams, and visions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Dieter, M. E. (1987). *Five views on sanctification*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Dollar, H. (1996). *St. Luke's missiology: A cross cultural challenge*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- Eaton, M. A. (1989). *Baptism with the Spirit: The teaching of Martyn Lloyd-Jones*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Edwards, J. (1974). *The works of Jonathan Edwards* (Vol. 1). Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth Trust.
- Fee, G. D. (1994). *God's empowering Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the letters of Paul*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Fernando, A. (1995). *The supremacy of Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- . (1998). *NIV application commentary: Acts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- . (2000). Being a Christian: What difference does it make? In J. Woodbridge, J. Akers, & J. Armstrong (Eds.), *Good news!* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Foster, R. (1989). *Celebration of discipline* (2nd ed.). New York: Harper & Row.
- Green, M. (1975). *I believe in the Holy Spirit*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Greenlee, J. H. (1994). *What the New Testament says about holiness*. Salem, OH: Schmul Publishing Co.
- Haenchen, E. (1971). *Acts of the Apostles: A commentary* (R. McL. Wilson, Trans.). Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press.
- Houston, J. (1989). *The transforming friendship: A guide to prayer*. Oxford, England: Lion Publishing.
- . (1990). *In search of happiness: A guide to personal contentment*. Oxford, England: Lion Publishing.
- Jones, E. S. (1968). *A song of ascents: A spiritual autobiography*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.
- Keener, C. (1996). *Three crucial questions about the Holy Spirit*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- . (1997). *The Spirit in the Gospel and Acts: Divine purity and power*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Kinlaw, D. F. (1985). *Preaching in the Spirit*. Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan Publishing House.

- Lloyd-Jones, D. M. (1984). *Joy unspeakable: Power and renewal in the Holy Spirit* (C. Catherwood, Ed.). Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers.
- . (1992). *Enjoying the presence of God* (C. Catherwood, Ed.). Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications.
- Marshall, I. H. (1970). *Luke: Historian and theologian*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Morgan, J. (1972 reprint). *A man of the Word: Life of G. Campbell Morgan*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Packer, J. I. (1990). *A quest for godliness: The Puritan vision of the Christian life*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- Peterson, E. (1996). *Take and read*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Piper, J. (1986). *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian hedonist*. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press.
- . (1995). *The purifying power of living by faith in future grace*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books.
- . (1997). *A Godward life: Savoring the supremacy of God in all of life*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers.
- . (1997). *A hunger for God*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- Ryken, L. (1986). *Worldly saints: The Puritans as they really were*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Sargent, T. (1994). *The sacred anointing: The preaching of Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- Stronstad, R. (1994). *The charismatic theology of St. Luke*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Sundar Singh, S. (1989). *The Christian witness of Sadhu Sundar Singh: A collection of his writings* (T. Dayanandan Francis, Ed.). Madras, India: Christian Literature Society.
- Toon, P. (1987). *From mind to heart: Christian meditation today*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- . (1991). *Meditating as a Christian: Waiting upon God*. London: Collins.
- Tozer, A. W. (1948). *The pursuit of God*. Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications.
- . (1985). *Whatever happened to worship* (G. B. Smith, Ed.). Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications.
- Tozer, A. W. (Ed.). (1963). *The Christian book of mystical verse*. Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications.
- Turner, M. (1996). *The Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts in the New Testament church and today*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Wesley, J. (1998 reprint). A plain account of Christian perfection. In *The works of John Wesley* (3rd ed.) (Vol. 11, pp. 366-446). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Willard, D. (1988). *The Spirit of the disciplines: Understanding how God changes lives*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- . (1998). *The divine conspiracy: Rediscovering our hidden life in God*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Wood, L. W. (1980). *Pentecostal grace*. Wilmore, KY: Francis Asbury Publishing Co.
- Wynkoop, M. B. (1972). *A theology of love: The dynamic of Wesleyanism*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City.



Ajith Fernando has led Sri Lanka Youth for Christ since 1976. Convinced of a call to theologize from the grassroots, he has always led a small division in YFC and presently leads the work with drug dependents. His

YFC responsibilities include teaching and pastoral care of staff. Ajith and his wife Nelun are active in the leadership of a Methodist church, most of whose members are converts from other religions. He has a Th.M. in New Testament from Fuller Theological Seminary. His nine books have been in the area of either Bible exposition, such as the *NIV Application Commentary: Acts* (Zondervan, 1998), or mission theology, such as *The Supremacy of Christ* (Crossway, 1995).



16

The church: the mirror of the Trinity

AJITH
FERNANDO

WE HAVE SO FAR considered key features that should impact missionary thinking today by looking at the work of the three Persons of the Trinity. Now we will consider some important things that Paul has to say about the church, which could be described as the mirror of the Trinity. But first it would be good to summarise the main points of the previous three studies, which give us a trinitarian basis for mission.

The Trinitarian Basis of Mission

God

We saw that God is the source, the originator, and the end of mission. As such, it was he who conceived the gospel, who called people to himself for salvation and for mission. The gospel is an expression of his nature as being both loving and holy. This gospel shows how he saves us from eternal damnation and grants us eternal salvation, which is the greatest of his many blessings to humankind. The fact that he regards unholiness with so much seriousness implies that now we must live holy lives of obedience to him.

God is creator and sustainer of the world and sovereign Lord of history and, through the processes of history, he is working to fulfil his purposes for his creation. Therefore, we are also to think of the world as our arena of responsibility and are to go into the structures of the world in order to impact them with God's values. In this way, we become agents of seeing God's will done on earth. However, knowing the limitations of what can be achieved on earth, we await the end of time, when God will wrap up history according to his good purposes.

Jesus

Jesus is the message and the model of mission. As the message, he is the way to salvation, which he won for us through his life and work. He is also the truth, by which we mean that as God he personifies absolute truth. We can know this truth, because through his incarnation Jesus has made it known to us. Jesus is also the life, giving to us the only life that can be described as life to the full.

As the model of mission, Jesus presents us with a model of gentle lowliness and servanthood and of suffering and deprivation. But if we are to adopt such a sacrificial model successfully, we must first know the strength that comes from the fact that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus and that this sovereign Lord is the one who commissions us to mission.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power that enables us to carry out our mission. We are grateful that the church has rediscovered this emphasis. Not only does the Spirit empower us for mission, but he also gives us gifts that we can use in mission, and he remains with us, banishing our loneliness and ministering to our personal needs. Through the Spirit's ministry, we can avoid the pitfalls of ministry, such as burnout and bitterness.

But all the blessings of God's equipping and empowering for ministry could be negated if the other aspect of the Spirit's work is neglected: he makes us holy. 1 Corinthians 13 gives us the boldness to affirm that while the power and gifts of the Spirit are important for our life and ministry, the purity that the Spirit gives is even more important.

The Church Has a Trinitarian Experience

In the New Testament, there is a close relationship between the nature of the church and the Trinity. This is clear in some of the expressions of how the church functions. Paul says, "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same *Spirit*. There are different kinds of service, but the same *Lord*. There are different kinds of working, but the same *God* works all of them in all men" (1 Cor. 12:4-6). All three Persons of the Trinity are presented here as being involved in the operation of the gifts. It is almost implied here that our rich diversity amidst unity expresses the unity in diversity of the Trinity. Paul's popular benediction shows how the distinctive ministries of the three Persons of the Trinity are experienced. "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:14). This trinitarian experience of the church is also described in Ephesians 2:18, "For through him [Christ] we both have access to the Father by one Spirit."

Paul also teaches that the unity Christians share has to do with the common tie we have with the three Persons of the Trinity. He says, "There is one body and one *Spirit*—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one *Lord*, one faith, one baptism; one *God and Father* of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

The Church and the Trinity in John 17

Jesus in his high priestly prayer goes even deeper in expounding the relationship between Christian unity and the Trinity than the Pauline texts we just looked at. One of Jesus' key themes in John 17 is the unity of the church. The clause "that they may be one" (vv. 11, 21, 22, 23) ap-

pears four times in this prayer. Several times in this chapter, Jesus also makes a connection between the nature of the church and the nature of the Trinity, even describing the church as a mirror of the Trinity.

Five important affirmations about unity are made in this passage. The first of these comes from verses 11b-12a, where Jesus says, “Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me.” Here Jesus is saying that our unity ensures our protection. The protection and preservation of the church would be an important concern in the mind of Christ as he prepares to leave his disciples. Verse 11 tells us that this protection takes place through the power of God’s name. Then he describes what this protection involves: “that they may be one as we are one.” So one of the ways in which the church is going to be preserved is by its unity.

Second, in this passage Jesus says that this unity reflects or mirrors the unity between Jesus and God. Three times in this prayer Jesus mentions that our unity with each other is like the unity between Christ and the Father (vv. 11, 21, 22).

The third great truth that this passage proclaims is that our unity with God is an essential part of our tie with God. Verse 21 says, “... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” Note the sequence, “... that all of them may be one ... may they also be in us.” There is a connection between our unity with each other and our unity with God. Verse 23 implies this too: “I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity.” Our unity with God cannot

be separated from our unity with each other.

The fourth truth to emerge from this passage is that part of Christ’s glory that we are given is our unity, which is, of course, similar to the unity of the Trinity. “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one” (v. 22). While the exact meaning of this verse is disputed, we can say that glory in such contexts refers to “the manifestation of God’s character or person in a revelatory context” (Carson, 1991, p. 569). This verse says that Jesus not only manifested the greatness of God’s glory to us, but also gave (*didōmi*) it to us. A key aspect of this glory that we have been given is the oneness of the Godhead. So if we receive this glory, then we should be one. The next verse increases the impact of what Jesus has already said by repeating the truth of how the unity of the Trinity is related to our unity with Christ, and it adds force to the description of the unity by referring to it as “complete.” “I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity” (v. 23). So when we think of the glory of God, let us also think of how it is expressed when there is complete unity in the church.

Before we go to the fifth truth from this passage, we will point out some things about the importance of the unity proclaimed here. It is clear from this passage that the unity of the church is a basic feature of Christianity. Not only does Christian unity reflect the unity of the Trinity, but it also is part of our essential tie with God. So if we do not relate properly with other Christians, we do not relate properly with God.

The Evangelical Movement rediscovered the glorious truth that God is concerned for us and relates to us as individuals. This brought great joy to us and obviously became a key aspect of our

thinking about Christianity. Naturally, if we rediscover such an amazing truth afresh, it would become our hallmark. But there is another important parallel truth in the Bible. While we relate to God personally, we also relate to him corporately. Salvation is individual, but it is not individualistic. Our being one with the rest of the church is connected to our relationship with God. So this passage teaches us that there is a three-fold unity in Christianity:

- God with Christ
- Christ with us
- Christians with each other

These then are foundational features of our being Christians: just as there is unity in the Godhead and unity between us and God, there must be unity among Christians. We can go so far as to say that our unity with each other is part of our essential unity with God and part of our essential identity as Christians. This is why John says, “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:20-21). While we sometimes think that we can separate our relationship with God from our relationship with fellow Christians, the Bible does not give us a warrant to do that.

The fifth affirmation coming from John 17 is that unity is a means of evangelistic effectiveness. Jesus has said in verse 18, “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” Twice Jesus says that an important aspect of this missionary role of the Christians is for them to demonstrate the gospel through the unity of the church. In verse 21, he says that their unity with God and with each other demonstrates the fact that God has sent Jesus to the world. “... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the

world may believe that you have sent me” (v. 21). In some way this tie shows the reality of the gospel. In verse 23, Jesus again says that the unity of the church demonstrates that God sent Jesus. But it adds the claim that unity also demonstrates that God loves the church. “I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (v. 23). When we love each other, we show the world that God loves us.

John 13:34-35 gives a similar message: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” I will not delve into how exactly this works. But let me say that the disunity of the church often crops up in my conversations with non-Christians. Once they feel the ice is broken and they can ask frank questions, they bring up this fact about the many divisions in the church. Their reasoning seems to be something like this: “How can this gospel be so great if it can’t unite even the Christians?”

I believe that many Christians in the West, where there is a high emphasis on competition and individualism, cannot understand why Christian disunity is such a scandal. Competition is something that has an almost religious significance to some in the West. But in Sri Lanka, communities still have a strong emphasis on solidarity. This bonding is an almost religious aspect of this culture. Therefore, unbelievers find it difficult to see how competition can exist among Christians in the society.

There has been a remarkable turning to Christ among the tribal peoples of India in recent years through the ministries of missionaries who have gone to them, primarily from South India. But there was one sad instance of missionaries who went

to a certain tribal people but were asked by the tribal leaders to leave after a period of time. The leaders said that the community had been united for many centuries. The Christians, however, were a divided community. So the leaders asked the Christians to leave because they did not want to see their people divided as the Christians were.

Paul's Theology of Unity

We now turn to Paul's exposition of Christian community. It would help to remind the reader that my study of Paul's Epistles focussed on the frequency of occurrence of certain themes. We considered themes that appeared often as being significant features of Paul's teachings to the early church. Our aim has been to see whether the church today is emphasising the things that Paul emphasised and to suggest remedial action in terms of emphases that should be found in our teaching of Christians today.

Clearly the church and how it functions is a very important theme in Paul. I want to highlight three features in Paul's teachings about the church: first, his theology of Christian unity; second, his exposition of how Christ breaks down barriers between humans; and third, his teaching on how Christians need each other.

Body of Christ theology and other metaphors

Paul presents an impressive array of theological points to show how Christians are united to each other. The most prominent of these is what we might call his body theology. I found 20 foundational statements covering 34 verses (20/34) which present the church as the body of Christ or a similar concept. Romans 12:4-5 is the first one I found, and it is repre-

sentative of the rest. Paul says, "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." The second reference I found is 1 Corinthians 10:16-17: "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."

Paul talks about the unity we have in diversity (3/5; Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 27), the fact that we belong to each other (3/7; Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 2:19-20; 4:4-6). Five times he presents spiritual gifts as an illustration of body theology (5/19; Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-6, 7-11, 28-30; Eph. 4:7-13). He says that the working of individual ministries and gifts illustrates body theology (4/13; 1 Cor. 3:5-9, 10-11; Gal. 2:7-10; Eph. 4:6) and that all the gifts are of equal importance in the body (2/12; 1 Cor. 12:14-20, 21-25). In our study on the Holy Spirit, we stated that, in the passages about gifts in the Epistles, the emphasis is not on the gifts per se but on the unity in diversity that is expressed through the gifts. In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul was trying to remedy the disorder resulting from the improper use of gifts within the body.

There are several other metaphors, apart from the body metaphor, that describe the nature of the church.¹ Here is a listing:

- 13/21 – Household/building/family of God (1 Cor. 3:9, 10-11; 2 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 4:4-7; 6:10; Eph. 2:19-22; 3:14-15; 4:6, etc.).
- 3/5 – Temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21-22).

¹ For a complete listing, see Minear (1960).

- 1/4 – God’s nation (Eph. 2:19-22).
- 3/9 – The new humanity (Rom. 5:17-21; 1 Cor. 15:21-22; Eph. 2:15-16).
- 2/5 – The bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:1-2; Eph. 5:25-27).
- 6/25 – The new Israel or children of Abraham (Rom. 9:8, 23-26; 11:17-21; Gal. 3:7-9, 26-29; 4:24-31).

Other theological bases for unity

There are other ways in which Paul affirms our unity in Christ. The “in Christ” motif is very common in Paul, and that is important in understanding Paul’s conception of the nature of the church. I counted about 150 occurrences of expressions like “in Christ,” “in Jesus,” and “in the Lord.” Many of these describe our personal experience of Christ. For example, Paul often uses expressions such as “faith in Christ” and “saved in Christ.” But some of these “in Christ” expressions clearly have to do with the unity we have as a Christian community (e.g., “my brother in Christ”). Sometimes it is difficult to sense whether a community connotation is included, but I was able to count about 65 occurrences of this community related use of the “in Christ” phrases. Paul viewed all Christians everywhere to be joined to each other because of their union with Christ.

Five times covering eight verses he talks of unity in the truth. An example is Ephesians 4:13, “... until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Paul often emphasises the fact that all Christians have a common experience of Christ or of God or of the faith (11/21). The trinitarian verse Ephesians 2:18 says, “For through him [Christ] we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.” In this verse, “both” refers to Jewish and Gentile Christians, implying that despite big cultural and racial differences, we are one because of our common expe-

rience of the Trinity. Paul’s appeal to unity in Philippians uses, among other arguments, their common experience of God. Philippians 2:1-2 says, “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.”

Paul also highlights the spiritual unity that Christians enjoy across the miles (4/5). In 1 Corinthians 5:3-4 he says, “Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgement on the one who did this, just as if I were present. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present....”

Practical implications

A strong theology of the church is the basis from which our body life operates. When we realise that we have so much in common, such important things to unite us, those aggravating things that divide us pale into insignificance. Indeed, things that break the harmony of the church will upset us. But because of our strong body theology, we will do all we can to bring back unity. We have the determination to persevere without giving up until unity is restored.

Ephesians 4 is a good example of this. A strong theological base for unity is presented here. In chapter 2, Paul had already appealed to the fact that Christ has broken the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles, creating one new person in place of two. Ephesians 4 is an extended description of the unity of the church. Paul begins the chapter by stating that he is going to show us how to live a life that is worthy of our call. He says, “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you

to live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (v. 1). What follows is a description of how to live a life worthy of our calling. The main verb is in verse 1 and is about living this life worthy of the call. Verses 2 and 3 have participles that illustrate how to live such a life.

In verse 2, Paul describes how our attitude to others in the body will help foster unity. "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." To be united, we must have Christian character (humility and gentleness), and we must be willing to put up with the weaknesses of people (being "patient bearing with one another in love"). The word translated "patient" is *makrothumia*, which the older translations rendered as "longsuffering." When there are things we don't like in our church or group, we don't leave the group. We suffer long, bearing with these weaknesses in love. So the first way we live a life worthy of our call is through exhibiting Christian character in community relationships.

The second way is described in verse 3, which also begins with a participle (see NRSV, NAS, etc.). Here Paul describes the urgency of striving for unity: "... making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This is a strong statement. The word *spoudazō* means to do one's best, to spare no effort, to work hard. Markus Barth (1974, p. 428), who translates this word as "take pains," says, "It is hardly possible to render exactly the urgency contained in the underlying Greek verb. Not only haste and passion, but full effort of the whole man is meant, involving his will, sentiment, reason, physical strength, and total attitude." An application of this idea is Christ's words about leaving our offering in front of the altar and getting reconciled with a brother who has something against us before making the offering (Matt. 5:23-24).

This action is for situations when others have problems with us.

The early church illustrates the urgency of peacemaking well. In Acts 6, when there is murmuring among the Grecians, there is an immediate meeting of the church, and a new structure is developed with leaders appointed to help meet the needs of the poor. In Acts 15, when a divisive teaching comes to Antioch from Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas immediately make the long trip to Jerusalem to confront the issue. The result is a conference where a peacemaking theological statement was produced. It contains those wonderful words, "... it seemed good to us, having become of one mind.... For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us ..." (Acts 15:25, 28, NAS). The urgency to solve the problem had resulted in a groundbreaking statement that not only avoided a split in the church, but also took the church forward to a great step of theological clarification.

Paul vehemently attacks disunity in his Epistles. There are 54 appeals to unity and direct confrontations of disunity covering 108 verses. There are 24 instances (covering 49 verses) of practical keys to dealing with disputable issues. That is a sizeable portion of the Epistles. Clearly, striving for unity is a priority in church life. To be committed to Christ and to holiness includes a commitment to the unity of the body of Christ.

Yet this is hard work that is very painful and stressful. In my 23 years of leading Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka, I believe this has been the most absorbing and toughest challenge I have faced. It is so stressful and so painful that I am often tempted to ignore the problem or postpone the confrontation of it. Yet when I have done that, the movement has always suffered. I believe that the biggest incentive to me to pursue unity has been the

theology of unity found in the Bible. If I take the Bible seriously, I must grapple for unity. Yet the Bible tells us that we have so much in common by virtue of our union with Christ that we can grapple for unity with much hope. We don't have to create a non-existent unity; we have to "maintain" what is there by divine appointment and action (Eph. 4:3) but which may have been temporarily clouded through human sin and weakness. We leaders have a huge role to play here in facilitating activities that restore unity.² As we see the way people are hopping from church to church and the way churches are splitting today, we sense that this teaching of Scripture is being neglected and violated on a large scale. This has become a serious scandal as far as the gospel is concerned.

Why is this happening? I think many growing churches are so practically oriented in their teaching and programme that they have not imbibed the biblical theology of community. If they had, they would realise that disunity is really serious business. Of course, theology is scorned today, so that people don't think it is such an important feature in determining behaviour. If we are to produce biblical Christians, we have a lot of repair work to do in this post-modern generation, which is a generation that downplays the importance of things like theology. We have to teach theology from the Word attractively and demonstrate how it is our standard not only for faith but also for practice—for day-to-day life.

Paul's appeal, "... making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3), is steeped in a rich theology of community. First, we note his expression "the unity of the Spirit." The Spirit is the one who joins us together. And because he lives with us, we have

been made one by virtue of our unity with Christ. Our unity is a theological and actual fact. This is why Paul says that we are to "maintain" this unity, not create it. Second, we note Paul's vigorous description of the theological ground for unity in verses 4-6: "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Our oneness is an established fact, and our job is to express what already exists. Third, verses 7-13 tell us that the operation of gifts given to each individual in the church also helps foster unity. After his description about how the gifts operate in the church (vv. 7-12), Paul says, "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (v. 13). The end results are unity and maturity.

What if these theological truths were burned into our hearts? When confronted by a problem and tempted to give up, our theology would challenge this tendency to lose hope about a resolution. Our theology would tell us that the problem is minute in comparison to the strength of what unites us. This theology will also give us the courage to persevere till a solution is found. In the darkest night, when we are hurt and tired and everything in us says, "Just drop it!" our theology will tell us, "What unites us is bigger than what divides." And we have the courage to persevere till there is a resolution. Perhaps, like Paul, we will be hurt and express our pain, as Paul did in his Epistles. But we will be agents of peace in the church.

Now this teaching about unity should not be confined to internal relationships within local churches only. Our body the-

² For a helpful guide to peacemaking in the church, see Sande (1997). Sande is an attorney who heads Peacemaker Ministries, a ministry devoted to conflict resolution.

ology tells us that all local Christian groups should relate to each other in unity, because they all belong to the same body of Christ. This theology of unity would cause us not to hurt other Christians in our quest for success and growth. How amazing it is that Christians are not afraid or ashamed to try to persuade people to leave one church or group and join another, even though they know that such a move will really hurt the group being left. How amazing that people will have discussions and make plans without mentioning anything to the other group.

I think this type of behaviour is related to the ethics of a market-oriented society that is sweeping the world today. In such a system, many people have no qualms about hurting a competitor in their march towards success. In the kingdom of heaven, we are not competitors. We all belong to the same body, and therefore we should not hurt others. Rather, we should be hurt when other Christians and groups hurt. Speaking at the North American Urbana Student Missionary Conference, Dr. Sam Kamaleson (1971, pp. 158-159) complained that we “reduce” the church by calling her “an international institution.” He said, “She is not an organization but a supernatural organism: She feels, she throbs with vitality. In other words, when the church in the United States is pinched, the church in India must say, ‘Ah, that hurts!’”

If we hurt another group in our march towards success, our little personal kingdom may expand a bit (perhaps it is like people becoming overweight with growth in the wrong places), but the kingdom of God will not ultimately grow. Eternity will show us that such work will be burnt up at the judgement. The church needs to rediscover the horror of sinning against

the body of Christ by expanding in a way that hurts another member of the body. I have observed some groups that adopt an “us” versus “them” mentality that causes them to compete against other Christian groups whom they regard as rivals. I have seen that often this divisive spirit ultimately affects the internal life of the group too. Factions form within the group, and often one of these factions ends up leaving the group. These groups do not have an adequate body theology to sustain them when conflicts hit them.

I was so heartened to hear that in a pastors fellowship in one of our cities in Sri Lanka, there is an agreement that when a member of one church goes to another, the pastors of the two churches will talk about the move and come to some agreement. I pray that they will persevere along this straight and narrow path, without getting distracted by the lure of quick success.

Christ Breaks Human Barriers³

A key feature of a biblical theology of the church is the truth that the gospel breaks human barriers, unifying believers into one people in Christ. Jesus showed how this is an essential feature of the gospel in his discourse on the Good Shepherd. After stating that he will give his life for the sheep (John 10:11-15), he says, “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd” (v. 16). The Jews who heard him would have understood what he meant by this statement. He was saying that his death would result in a new flock where the Jew-Gentile barrier would be broken. And one new people would be raised up who would be under one shepherd, Jesus Christ.

³ For a fuller description of this theme, see chap. 13, “The New Humanity,” in Fernando (1995).

This theme appears prominently in Paul too. 12 times covering 31 verses Paul expounds the truth that the gospel breaks human barriers. This includes 10/25 basic statements of this truth and 2/6 statements where Paul describes his call to be a herald of this great message of the new humanity where barriers are broken. Let's look at two of these passages.

The first passage is 2 Corinthians 5:14-17. Verses 14 and 15 describe the work of Christ: "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." Then Paul goes on to describe the consequences of this work of Christ. "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer" (v. 16). This verse begins with the word *böste*, meaning "so" or "therefore." There is a clear connection, then, between the work of Christ and the renunciation of the practice of regarding people from a worldly point of view (literally, "according to the flesh," *kata sarka*). What the world considers important about people is not what Paul considers important. Race, class, caste, and education are all insignificant in the light of the amazing thing that God has done, the light of which is so strong that other human factors pale into insignificance. Now we look at people from the perspective of verse 17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" The blessing of this new life is so great that earlier differences are so small in comparison.

I like to describe this situation as the difference between two people, one of whom had 10 cents and the other had 20 cents. Now both are given a million dollars. Can the second tell the first, "I am

richer than you are"? Earlier differences are insignificant. We are all hell-bent sinners with no hope, who have now been given the wonderful grace of eternal life. Those who feel inferior or superior to others because of earthly distinctions have not understood the horror of sins or the marvels of grace.

This same theme is repeated in Ephesians 2. After talking about how grace saves us (2:1-10), Paul goes on, through a vivid, rich, and sustained statement, to mention how the cross broke the Jew-Gentile barrier. He first describes our miserable pre-Christian state (vv. 11-12). Then he says, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ" (v. 13). Next he proceeds to present the work of Jesus on the cross as the work of peacemaking (vv. 14-18). This is such a rich passage I will simply quote it in full: "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit."

In light of this strong emphasis on the breaking of human differences through the cross, we should be very careful about overemphasising the homogenous unit principle that is very popular in Evangelical missiological circles today. The church is characterised by the unifying of different peoples and not by the segregation of peoples according to their own kind. Indeed, with cultural contextualisation, it is necessary to gear our evangelism bearing cultural distinctives in mind. But that truth

must be balanced by the other truth that Christ joins different groups of people into a united community. This is not easy in practice. But we must patiently grapple to find a biblical balance without going headlong into unprincipled church growth.

For example, it is inevitable that worship services have to be separated according to language when people speaking two different languages worship in the same church building. But there must be times when the two groups could get together in order to affirm their oneness in Christ, despite the cultural diversity. One such way to do this is to have an occasional bilingual service. Having been involved in organising such, I must say that this is an extremely difficult thing to do. If we slavishly have everything in both languages, the service could drag on and be extremely boring. Often the dominant group has a service which is reasonably comfortable for them but which in the meantime infuriates those in the other group, thus increasing the alienation. Immense creativity and hard work are needed to have a meaningful service. And even after all the creativity and hard work, it will probably be not be as “exciting” or “entertaining” as the usual service. Most people, therefore, just choose to not have any combined events, as it is simply too difficult to do. But our theology of the body should drive us to strive to do such things, in order to affirm our unity in this fragmented society.

Anyway, this is a basic Christian principle. We work at differences in order to affirm our unity in Christ in practice. This is how two diverse people can forge a happy marriage despite their differences. It calls for hard work at unity. Unfortunately, these days, people seem to be willing to work hard for growth but not for unity.

While overemphasis of the homogenous unit principle may produce short-term evangelistic gain, it may result in

long-term evangelistic loss. Christians would get the reputation of perpetuating unjust class structures. There have been several instances of so-called “low caste” Hindus or “untouchables” or *Dalits*, as they prefer to call themselves, turning to Buddhism or Islam, when they wanted to reject the Hinduism that bred the terrible caste system of which they are victims. The most famous of these instances was under Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956), the principal framer of the Indian Constitution, who led a mass movement of his fellow “untouchables” to Buddhism (see Bechert, 1984, pp. 277-278). The Hindus rejected Christianity because they felt Christianity perpetuated the caste system. They would cite instances of churches that were constituted (unofficially, of course) along caste lines.

How important this message is in a world torn by national, racial, ethnic, and social strife. We can affirm that in Christ we are one, and through the church we can present a model of integration and harmony. This becomes a point of hope in a gloomy situation of mistrust and strife. It could show that people of different races could indeed live together without separating nations according to ethnic divides. This is my great hope for the church in my nation of Sri Lanka that is torn by ethnic strife. I hope that by looking at Sinhala and Tamil Christians living in harmony with each other, our fellow citizens would develop hope to believe that it is indeed possible for people of the two races to live together in harmony and trust.

But if the church is to do this, it must first proclaim this message. I believe this is one of the most urgent messages to proclaim in a world that is destroying itself through social strife. But in keeping with our marketing orientation, we are so committed to giving people what they want to hear that we could be neglecting to tell them some of the things that God wants

them to hear. We can focus so much on felt needs that we ignore real and urgent needs, which remain unacknowledged by people, such as the need to repent of prejudice. The result is that Christians do not think of unity as a basic feature of Christianity. They still have the class, caste, and race prejudices of the society around them. This accounts for the terrible history of prejudice among supposedly conservative Christians. We have a lot of work to do here because of the sad history of Christians. Sometimes rulers used the Bible to justify their belief in the superiority of one race over another. Some suggested that they belonged to the people who have entered a new Promised Land. By doing so, they justified their crushing of the original dwellers in this land to submission.

This theme, then, must come into the forefront of the preaching of the church. Paul made a radical statement in his evangelistic preaching in Athens when he said, "From one man he made every nation of men" (Acts 17:26). On this, F. F. Bruce (1990, p. 382) comments, "The Athenians prided themselves on being *autochthones*, sprung from the soil of their native Attica.... The Greeks in general considered themselves superior to non-Greeks, whom they called barbarians. Against such claims to racial superiority, Paul asserts the unity of all mankind, a unity derived *ex enos*, i.e., from Adam." By making this statement, Paul risked losing his audience. But it was a truth so basic to Christianity that he needed to proclaim it. In today's context, when we challenge people to repent and come to Christ, we may need to challenge them to repent of the sins of racism and prejudice. People should know that when they become Christians, they cease to be racists.

If we hold back things like this, we will pay a heavy price in the end. People would

be comfortable with the idea of being racist and Christian at the same time, though these are two mutually exclusive ideas. They should know that when they come to Christ they turn from, among other things, fornication, greed, idols, and racism. Let the message that Christ breaks human barriers, then, come to the forefront of Christian proclamation.

Christians Need Each Other

The idea that Christians are very much a part of a community and not individuals operating independently of others is another of the very forcefully presented teachings in the Epistles of Paul. This is the implication in all the passages on body theology that we mentioned before. It is implied in most of the other metaphors used for the church by Paul, such as household, building, or family of God. The passages discussed above that present the theological base for unity also imply this. But there are many other factors that push us to this idea that we are not independent of others. Let me list some of these, giving the number of references and the number of verses covered, followed by one representative reference.

- 8/15 – We have a common destiny and inheritance: "This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 3:6).
- 26/55 – Love in the community: "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love" (Rom. 12:10).
- 25/34 – Generosity, helping each other: "Share with God's people who are in need" (Rom. 12:13).
- 15/21 – Accepting/bearing with/helping those who are weak or different: "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (Rom. 15:7).

- 3/7 – Seeking to please others rather than ourselves: “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4).

- 3/6 – Believing each other: “Love always trusts” (1 Cor. 13:7).

- 5/7 – Sharing joy: “Rejoice with those who rejoice” (Rom. 12:15).

- 10/10 – Hospitality: “Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality” (Rom. 12:13).

- 15/25 – No pride or superiority, rather humility and appreciating others: “Honour one another above yourselves” (Rom. 12:10).

- 5/3 – Sensitivity to etiquette and to others and their feelings: “Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers” (1 Tim. 5:1).

- 1/1 – Accountability: “In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman” (1 Cor. 11:11).

- 9/12 – Mutual edification: “I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith” (Rom. 1:11-12).

- 21/37 – Intolerance for unholiness: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Eph. 4:29).

- 4/5 – Intolerance for dishonesty and untruthfulness: “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body” (Eph. 4:25).

- 14/26 – Church discipline: “Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord” (1 Cor. 5:5).

- 3/6 – Judgement for impurity in the church: “For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord

eats and drinks judgement on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgement. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11:29-32).

- 7/8 – Fellowship of suffering among Christians: “So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God” (2 Tim. 1:8).

- 11/18 – Suffering out of concern when Christians have problems: “Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?” (2 Cor. 11:28-29).

- 13/14 – Sharing in comfort and suffering: “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it” (1 Cor. 12:26).

- 4/7 – Enjoying fellowship: “Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy” (2 Tim. 1:4).

- 10/16 – Refreshment through fellowship: “... so that by God’s will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed” (Rom. 15:32).

- 26/37 – Joy and pride over others and their actions: “Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!” (Phil. 4:1).

- 16/36 – Paul prays for his readers: “I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers” (2 Tim. 1:3).

- 8/13 – Paul requests prayer for himself: “Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may de-

clare it fearlessly, as I should" (Eph. 6:19-20).

- 37/110 – On community worship: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16).

What a huge list this is! It includes 25 topics. To this we could add the so-called *sun* compounds which Paul is fond of using. This name is given when the Greek prefix *sun*, which means "co-" or "fellow," is added to a word. Scholars tell us that such compounds are not as significant in Hellenistic Greek as they are in classical Greek.⁴ But there are a few somewhat significant occurrences of *sun* compounds that refer to relations within the body. I found 18 such occurrences of nouns and 27 of verbs. An important noun is *sun-ergos*, meaning "fellow worker," which is found nine times.

It is clear that, according to Paul, Christians cannot grow alone. John Wesley said, "The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." Miroslav Volf (1998, p. 162) says, "No one can come to faith alone, and no one can live in faith alone." Volf (1998, pp. 11-18) shows how it is the free churches that are growing today, but that these churches have a very individualistic ecclesiology. Perhaps we have overreacted to the Roman Catholic understanding of salvation. The Catholic slogan *extra ecclesiam, nulla salus*, which means, "Outside the church, no salvation," shows how they view the church's role in salvation. They give salvific value to the means of grace, such as the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, and thus view salvation as being mediated through the church. The Protestant Reformation rediscovered the glorious truth of individual salvation. But

we may have gone to the other extreme and neglected the fact that the context in which this salvation occurs is the church.

Charles Van Engen argues that the individualism of the church is an example of the church taking on the features of modernism. He gives an extended quotation from a description of American society by Norman Kraus (1993, pp. 31-32; cited in Van Engen, 1996, p. 211):

"In American society today, the unquestioned assumption is that the individual takes precedence over the group. Freedom means individual independence. Civil rights means the individual's right to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'

"The concept of organic community has been heavily eroded by technology, urbanisation, political ideology, and legal definition. Even marriage and family are increasingly accepted as matters of individual contract and convenience. The group has become for us a collection of individuals created *by* individuals for their own individual advantages."

When we contrast this description with the many times Christians are described as those who die for others, we realise how different the Christian ethic is from that of the society around us. This ethos has certainly influenced the church in the West, and it is trickling to churches in other lands too. The extreme form of this is the electronic church, where people don't even need to go to church on Sunday.

To many people, the purpose of fellowship is to get a blessing. Accountability and commitment are not serious considerations. When someone sins, we may simply ignore it because it is "none of our business." Yet a life without accountability is a lonely life. Society has tried so many things to get over this loneliness. Small

⁴ D. A. Carson in a personal conversation.

groups are flourishing in the church once again. This is an encouraging sign. But often the small groups consist of people who have entered into an artificial grouping, where they don't live or work closely to each other. So there is isn't much opportunity to develop deep ties and honest and open accountability. Often the groups meet only for a short period of time. They break up before real trust and openness have developed. Accountability is a body function, something that people who work close to each other develop. The type of group that I have just described will certainly help those who are involved in them. But a longer time and closer ties are needed to develop the type of fellowship that we can call spiritual accountability, where people walk in the light with each other (1 John 1:7).

Internet chatting is helping many. But here too one does not need to be accountable. Can people find security in anonymous conversations with people to whom they are not even willing to disclose their identities? Counsellors and psychotherapists are being used by many to fill this void caused by the individualisation of society. Thomas Szaz, himself a psychotherapist, has said, "Psychotherapy is the purchase of friendship." So a deep void remains in the lives of many people today.

And what can we say about our pursuit of holiness? In Paul, much of the pursuit of holiness is to be done in community. 2 Timothy 2:22 is a great holiness verse: "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace...." I preached on this text in my homiletics class in seminary. During the evaluation of the sermon, my professor, Dr. Jerry Mercer, gently reminded me that I left out the last part of that verse, which may be the most important part of it. It says, "... along with those who call on the

Lord out of a pure heart." I think that by not noticing such an important feature of this verse, I was reflecting the individualism that is so typical of Evangelicalism.

So many Christian leaders today have no one to whom they are spiritually accountable. Many have Boards to help them to be accountable with their schedules, programmes, and finances. But they don't have people to check them on things that challenge them in their Christian life. How helpful it would be to have people to check on how our devotional life is going or on how we are faring with a bad habit like losing our tempers at home. So many stories are circulating about how adult television is being watched in hotels by Christian leaders at conferences that it is a thing that should be causing a lot of concern. This is especially so with the moral fall of many travelling Christian leaders recently. All of us have areas of vulnerability to sin in our lives, and the biblical pattern is for us to get help from other Christians. Hebrews 10:24 says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

The biblical pattern is for all ministry to be done in community. Travelling preachers, for example, should never consider themselves as lone persons who perform in their area of expertise and then go on to their next assignment. In the Gospels and Acts, you almost never find a preacher travelling alone. They did their ministry in community. Today, for many, travelling with another is not economically viable, though it should be encouraged whenever possible. George Müller had an amazing travel schedule for 17 years after retiring from his orphanages at age 70. But he travelled with his wife Susannah on most of these trips (Steer, 1975, p. 236). Paul pointed out that several apostles took their wives along with them on their travels, though he did not have that luxury

(1 Cor. 9:5). But he always had others travelling with him.

Even when travelling preachers travel alone, they can do their ministry in community. Journeys today do not take too long, unlike in the New Testament era. A car or train or bus or plane gets them to their destination fairly soon. They could have friends in their home base support them with prayer and concern. These same people could receive the report of how they fared in ministry and in personal behaviour during the trip. When John Stott retired from being Rector at All Soul's Church in London to launch into an itinerant ministry, he remained on the staff team there as Rector Emeritus, living in a flat owned by the church. Now, after retiring from the staff team, he still has what he calls his Accountability Group of Elders, which helps him decide what assignments to take and generally monitors his ministry. While travelling ministers are ministering in a place, their hosts could be the community that supports them. This ministry to the travelling minister would be greatly enhanced if they live in homes from this community. In this way, the tie with the church is deepened, and the minister can identify with the people much better by being among them in this closer way. Besides, just as in New Testament times, when hospitality for travelling Christians was strongly encouraged,⁵ hotels today are not very clean places in terms of morality.⁶

We are facing a new phenomenon in many of our nations, where foreign groups appoint "their representative" in a given country. They help this person, whose ministry they now consider as an extension of their own ministry. Unfortunately, the accountability that they can offer is a long-distance one which is confined to occasional visits to the country and regular written reports. The pioneer is not blessed with a community that will help him or her. Often major problems emerge after a time, as unhealthy patterns are allowed to grow with no one to help check them. Is it any wonder that so many Christian leaders are falling into serious sin today? Such falls are never sudden. If these leaders had been accountable to others, the problems would have surfaced much earlier, and remedial steps could have been taken before the problems went so deep.

We repeat the major point in this section: Christianity is a community religion, and all Christians, both new and mature, are expected to live their Christian lives and carry out their ministries with help from fellow Christians.

Conclusion: A Prophetic Community Life

Biblical community is an area in which the church will have to present a prophetic alternative in today's society. Yet I fear that this is an area in which we have conformed greatly to the pattern of the world. I fear that cultural blinds, which cause us to ig-

⁵ Rom. 12:13; 16:23; 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:10; Tit. 1:8; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9; 2 John 10; 3 John 5-8. Hospitality is a key theme in the Lukan writings. Acts often mentions the names of hosts who opened their homes for missionaries to live in and/or stay at for meals or meetings (9:43; 10:23, 48; 12:12; 16:15, 34; 17:5-7; 18:2-3, 7, 26; 21:8, 16; 28:7). On this subject, see Koenig (1985, pp. 85-123). On hospitality for travelling preachers, see Fernando (1998, pp. 312-315, 438, 444, 448, 452-453, 491, 552).

⁶ On the moral impurity of inns in New Testament times, see Ferguson (1993, p. 82) and Fernando (1998, p. 312).

nore important principles of biblical community, often hamper us.⁷ I fear that many of our structures of community life are derived more from the business world than from the Bible. Success is measured by numerical growth, and we can achieve such growth by using the best principles of marketing. When Christian leaders hear the biblical teaching about community expounded, they say “Amen” and heartily agree. But often, because of the passion to grow, they will ignore or break these biblical principles in practice.

We will use an unholy but talented pianist for a big programme because we cannot find someone to replace him or her at the last moment. We will start new programmes without ensuring that the workers there are well looked after in terms of accountability and pastoral care. We will lower our standards of community solidarity. We have small groups that don’t demand long-term commitment from people. The content of the gospel message is so powerful and relevant to human need that the church will grow if we proclaim it. But people will join us as they join the group of people who drink Coca-Cola. They are not committed to the church. So the moment they find another church that will meet their needs better, or the moment they have problems in their church, they will switch churches—just as they switch to lemonade when they decide that they do not like Coke.

We have to be prophetic in the way we practice biblical community, because biblical community is so different from what we see in the world. This may seem evangelistically problematic, because it may look as if we are not meeting people’s acknowledged needs. But, though biblical

community may seem not to meet acknowledged needs, it certainly meets real needs that cause an ache deep in the heart. Among these needs are the need for accountability and correction, the need for an authority to which to submit, the need to be holy, and the need to have the security of knowing that people will stick with us no matter what happens to us. How many people today live with deep, unarticulated hurt because they have been dumped by the group to which they belonged! The prophetic way may seem at first to be irrelevant and unpopular. But because it meets these deep needs, it could ultimately prove to be very relevant.

By practising Christian community, we could help foster holy, secure, and loving people. And the world will look at us and notice the difference. They will see that this is what they are really looking for, even though they did not acknowledge this need at first. Actually we are seeing that post-modernism is placing a new emphasis on the need for community life, which was undervalued in the strongly individualistic modern era. I am convinced that when the world recognises the awful loneliness and unfulfilment of the independent and private lifestyles that are rampant today, Christian community could be one of the most powerful forces for people coming to Christ (see Storkey, 1994).⁸ Then Jesus’ claim that the world would believe when the church is one, as the Father and Jesus are one (John 17:21, 23), would prove to be true. Being a prophetic presence through radical biblical community life may be one of the biggest challenges facing the church in the 21st century.

⁷ For an attempt at remedying this situation, see Fernando (1991).

⁸ This was confirmed to me in a conversation with the eminent British Christian sociologist Alan Storkey.

References

- Barth, M. (1974). *Ephesians: Introduction, translation, and commentary*. The Anchor Bible. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co.
- Bechert, H. (1984). Buddhist revival in East and West. In H. Bechert & R. Gombrich (Eds.), *The world of Buddhism*. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd.
- Bruce, F. F. (1990). *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek text with introduction and commentary* (3rd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Ferguson, E. (1993). *Backgrounds of early Christianity* (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Fernando, A. (1991). *Reclaiming friendship: Relating to each other in a fallen world*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press.
- . (1995). *The supremacy of Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- . (1998). *NIV application commentary: Acts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Kamaleson, S. (1971). The local church and world evangelism. In J. R. W. Stott et al. (Eds.), *Christ the liberator*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Koenig, J. (1985). *New Testament hospitality: Partnership with strangers as promise and mission*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.
- Kraus, C. N. (1993). *The community of the Spirit: How the church is in the world*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press.
- Minear, P. S. (1960). *Images of the church in the New Testament*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press.
- Sande, K. (1997). *The peacemaker: A biblical guide to resolving personal conflict* (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Steer, R. (1975). *George Müller: Delighted in God!* Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers.
- Storkey, A. (1994). *The meanings of love*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Van Engen, C. (1996). *Mission on the way: Issues in mission theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Volf, M. (1998). *After our likeness: The church as the image of the Trinity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.



Ajith Fernando has led Sri Lanka Youth for Christ since 1976. Convinced of a call to theologise from the grassroots, he has always led a small division in YFC and presently leads the work with drug dependents. His

YFC responsibilities include teaching and pastoral care of staff. Ajith and his wife Nelun are active in the leadership of a Methodist church, most of whose members are converts from other religions. He has a Th.M. in New Testament from Fuller Theological Seminary. His nine books have been in the area of either Bible exposition, such as the **NIV Application Commentary: Acts** (Zondervan, 1998), or mission theology, such as **The Supremacy of Christ** (Crossway, 1995).



Part 4

Addressing issues of globalized Evangelical missiology

ONE OF THE MAJOR PURPOSES of the Iguassu Consultation was to offer models of biblical and globalized missiology. We sought a theology of mission that was true to Scripture, sensitive to the world's cultures, and relevant for the entire family of God in mission. We are convinced that this international perspective has become one of the unique contributions of this book. In this spirit, we offer the diverse metaphors of the feast—the refracted diamond and the tapestry—rich, diverse, light-giving, variegated, relevant, beautiful. There was also a sense of releasing a new “architecture of contextualization,” with open space for new designs and ways of doing theology and missiology, with a “round table” that allows equal sitting space for all participants.

The anchor came in Adeyemo's presentation, followed by the flow from the major regions of the church around the world—Turaki of Africa, Daimoi from the South Pacific, Tan from East Asia, Rajendran from India, Greenlee from North Africa, Masih of the Middle East, Saracco from Latin America, McAlister presenting the younger Western generations, and Adeney from North America. This material was initially presented in regional break-out sessions, and therefore it is not



until the release of this book that we are able to enjoy the nourishment that comes from this globalized table.

It has been encouraging to read these chapters, crafted with integrity, confession, and courage, and certainly with creativity. The diverse styles reflect the writers' giftings as well as their approach to the subject. The authors speak for themselves, and these are their serious reflections. Now these chapters become foundations for further study and contextualization of missiology for the church.



17

Profiling a globalized and Evangelical missiology

TOKUNBOH
ADEYEMO

AS THE TURN OF THIS century approaches with its challenges and opportunities, we, the Evangelicals of Africa, see the need for an invigorated, compassionate, and uncompromising Evangelical response to the contemporary social, political, economic, and religious realities of our day....

“We reaffirm our commitment to the Lordship of Christ and our obedience to the great command of loving God and our neighbours and the Great Commission of discipling all nations....

“In the light of the tremendous social, political, and religious burdens Africa bears today, the call of winning Africa for Jesus is urgent and requires all Christians of Africa to respond in order to impact their continent for the kingdom of God.

“We therefore resolve to win Africa for Jesus...!”¹

This is the united voice of a movement, the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA). Representing over 60 million Evangelicals in 44 duly organized national Evangelical alliances, the AEA is determined to reach all of Africa with the gospel by planting churches and establishing Evangelical networks in all of the 56 nations of Africa by the year 2000. When the call was made in November 1993, there were only 27 such national networks. As we meet at Iguassu, in

¹ Taken from *Declaration: The Resolution of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA)*, made at the end of its Sixth General Assembly held in Lagos, Nigeria, October 31 – November 9, 1993, under the theme, “Africa for Jesus.” It was attended by over 500 delegates from 46 nations.

October 1999, there are 44 of them, leaving 12 nations to go.² This is a partial story of a continent that was dubbed “dark” in the middle of the 19th century by its explorers. Then her coasts were hazardous, her jungles impregnable, her pests deadly, and her people full of savagery. Many were the explorers and missionaries who died and were buried on her soil. In spite of their shortcomings—and there were many of them—and though Africa still has other problems, she can no longer be called a “dark continent,” because the entrance of God’s words has brought light to her (Psalm 119:130). We are indelibly grateful to God and thankful to those who brought the gospel to us. Nothing could stop them—hostile chiefs, fierce lions, unfriendly climate, nothing; the King’s job must be done even at the expense of their lives. By faith and courage, the men and women who brought us the good news dared to step out into what appeared as a void. Sweat and tears characterized their endeavours.

Take, for example, the SIM International (then Sudan Interior Mission) founding fathers. Within the first year of their arrival in my country, Nigeria (December 1893), Tom Kent and Walter Gowans took ill and died, leaving Rowland Bingham to the vision of reaching the interior part of black Africa, then known as the Soudan. This was not exceptional. The graveyards of missionaries at Kijabe, Kenya, bear a silent testimony to the com-

mitment and sacrificial love of these great forebears. My colleague, Canon Bayo Famonure (1994), writes, “While one tombstone reads ‘Satisfied,’ another one says, ‘He has done all things well.’ In fact, the west coast of Africa claimed so many lives that it became known as the ‘white man’s grave.’” The superintendent of the Methodist Mission for West Africa based at the coastal city of Lagos in Nigeria was reported to have said to Kent, Gowans, and Bingham upon their arrival in 1893, “Young men (they were aged 20, 23, and 25), you will never see the Soudan; your children will never see the Soudan; your grandchildren may” (SIM NOW, p. 4).

He was wrong, for the three men did see the Soudan. Though the death of Kent and Gowans brought temporary setback, Bingham remained tenacious to the original passion and vision. Today, the national church that was founded through their efforts, the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA), is not only one of the largest denominations in Nigeria but also has the largest missionary society in the country.³

This heroic, laudable, missionary heritage became the cradle for the birth of the church in Africa during the 19th century. Alongside their European and American counterparts, African missionaries blazed the dark forests of their motherland to spread the gospel and plant churches in different cultures. They laboured together in beautiful biblical partnership. What are

² Each national Evangelical network serves as a light-bearer to the nation. Its primary purpose is to rally together and mobilize member churches, mission agencies, and individual believers to reach the unreached people groups within its national boundary. Five of the remaining 12 nations are Islamic (Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Western Sahara, and Tunisia); four are small islands (Cape Verde, São Tomé/Príncipe, St. Helena, and Reunion); and the remaining three are Equatorial Guinea, Congo Brazzaville, and Gabon. Plans are afoot to reach at least seven of these nations by A.D. 2000.

³ In 1998, the Evangelical Missionary Society of ECWA reported a missionary force of 1,200 missionaries (including spouses and children) serving in 13 different fields (8 within Nigeria and 5 in other nations).

the foundations of their (and of our) Evangelical missiology, that also reflect the unique contextualizing contributions of the globalized church?

Foundations of Evangelical Missiology

The Christ-event

The first and foremost foundation is the Christ-event. By the Christ-event, Evangelical missiologists speak of the six major "salvific events" portrayed in the New Testament. David Bosch (1991, pp. 512-518) identifies this sixfold event as "the incarnation of Christ, his death on the cross, his resurrection on the third day, his ascension, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the parousia."

By his incarnation, Jesus, our supreme missionary model, fully identified with those he came to seek and save. "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity..." (Heb. 2:14). Jesus of Nazareth left his glory in heaven, wearily trod the dusty roads of Palestine, and poured out compassion on the social outcasts of his day. "In this model," writes Bosch (1991, p. 513), "one is not interested in a Christ who offers only eternal salvation, but in a Christ who agonizes and sweats and bleeds with the victims of oppression." No Evangelical theology (of the West or of the Two-Thirds World) will ever deny the kenosis of Jesus. Yet it is the rise of liberation theology in Latin America that has given the incarnation of Jesus the missiological prominence that it deserves (see Núñez & Taylor, 1989, p. 255). Commenting on the birth of Jesus and its implication for missions, John Stott (1978, p. 451) states, "Jesus could not have served human need by remaining aloof in the safe isolation of his heaven; he had to enter our world. And his entry was not a superficial visit like a tip-and-run raid, or like the arrival of an immigrant who refuses

to become acculturated to the land of his adoption, or like a spaceship touchdown in which the astronaut protects himself from exposure in a spacesuit. No. He laid aside his immunity to pain, weakness, sorrow, suffering, and temptation. He became flesh and lived among us. He made himself vulnerable when he made himself one with us."

Next to the incarnation in the continuum of the Christ-event is the cross. Having made himself one with us in our humanity and sorrows, now Jesus also identified himself with our sins, our guilt, and our death. The Apostle Paul says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). According to Moltmann (1975, p. 4), the cross of Jesus is, uniquely, the badge of distinction of the Christian faith. Without the cross, Christianity would be a religion of cheap grace.

John Stott (1986) has clearly summarized the fourfold theological significance of the cross—namely, propitiation, redemption, justification, and reconciliation. But it was Shutz (quoted in Bosch, 1991, p. 514) who aptly drew out the missionary significance of the cross saying, "Suffering is the divine mode of activity in history.... The church's mission in the world, too, is suffering ... is participation in God's existence in the world."

In the traditional non-Christian religious milieu, the cross with its rituals and symbolism is most appealing. The ultimate sacrifice has been made by God himself in the death of his Son, the "Peace Child," so that through the cross humanity may be reconciled not only to God but also one to another. "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.... His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace" (Eph. 2:14-15). Therefore,

our missionary message is that in Christ there is no Hutu or Tutsi, no white or black, no rich or poor, and no male or female. The late Bishop Festo Kivengere stated powerfully, "At the foot of the cross the ground is level, and there is no raised platform."

Great as the doctrine of the cross is, it will be meaningless without the resurrection. Early Christians viewed the Easter event as the vindication of Jesus. Peter could boldly declare on the day of Pentecost, "God has raised this Jesus to life" (Acts 2:32). To Paul, if Jesus wasn't raised, everything was vain—both the apostolic preaching and the disciples' faith (1 Cor. 15:14). According to Berkhof (1966, p. 180), the cross and the resurrection are not in balance with each other. Rather, the resurrection has the ascendancy and victory over the cross. The resurrection is a message of joy, hope, and victory—the first fruits of God's ultimate triumph over the enemy. Bosch (1991, p. 515) declares, "Missiologically this means, first, that the central theme of our missionary message is that Christ is risen, and that, secondly and consequently, the church is called to live the resurrection life in the here and now and to be a sign of contradiction against the forces of death and destruction—that it is called to unmask modern idols and false absolutes."

Christ's commission to his church to make disciples of all nations is predicated upon the reality of his resurrection and consequent Lordship (see Matt. 28:18-19; John 20:19-21). As Lord, he commands—not suggests nor advises—his church to make disciples.

Following the resurrection is the ascension. The ascension is the symbol of the enthronement of the crucified and risen Christ, who now reigns as King. Paul by the Spirit declares, "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the

name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

By this declaration, both the scope and the essence of Christ's reign are underscored. No one is excluded from submission to his Lordship—whether a socialist French, a secularist English, a religious Indian, a Communist Chinese, or a superstitious African. As Lord, Jesus Christ has both power and authority to control and shape human destiny.

Confessing Jesus as Lord has untold missiological implications. It means complete surrender of our will to his and total, unequivocal obedience to his commands. Under Communist regimes, confessing Jesus as Lord has meant coming into conflict against the powers-that-be, with consequent imprisonment or death. In many a totalitarian regime, it could mean civil disobedience of unjust rules and corrupt structures. And in post-modern secularist society, it means a radical examination of our lifestyle and values and an unequivocal denunciation of all atheistic humanist tendencies and theories. Bosch (1991, p. 516) states, "Mission from this perspective means that it should be natural for Christians to be committed to justice and peace in the social realm. God's reign is real, though as yet incomplete." To assist and empower the church to bear its witness to Christ effectively, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost. The apostles were not to go out on their mission alone, without the abiding presence and power of the Holy Spirit. To do otherwise would have been tantamount to abysmal failure. The Holy Spirit with them, who would reside in them from Pentecost on, would among other things:

- Testify about Jesus Christ.
- Prepare the hearts of unbelievers before the arrival of evangelists.

- Convict unbelievers of sin, righteousness, and judgment.
- Lead them to repentance.
- Quicken faith in them to believe in Jesus Christ.
- Bring about the new birth through Christ (John 15:26-27; 16:8-11; 7:37-39).

It is inconceivable, therefore, to think of Christian mission without a central place being given to the Holy Spirit. "We cannot win souls to Christ merely by advertizing or by preaching, or by witnessing, or by arguing," writes John Stott (1978, p. 454). He goes on to say, "I do not say that these methods of evangelism are unnecessary, for the Holy Spirit can and does use them all. What I am saying is that they are insufficient without the work of the Holy Spirit in and through them." The Manila Manifesto (1989, par. 5) puts it succinctly: "The Scriptures declare that God himself is the chief evangelist. For the Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth, love, holiness, and power, and evangelism is impossible without him. It is he who anoints the messenger, confirms the word, prepares the hearer, convicts the sinful, enlightens the blind, gives life to the dead, enables us to repent and believe, unites us to the Body of Christ, assures us that we are God's children, leads us into Christlike character and service, and sends us out in our turn to be Christ's witnesses. In all this the Holy Spirit's main preoccupation is to glorify Jesus Christ by showing him to us and forming him in us."

It can be stated categorically, therefore, that our mission is God's mission: the Son supplies the model, and the Holy Spirit supplies the power.

Between ascension and parousia, the disappearance and the reappearance of Jesus, the church is to engage in worldwide witness in the power of the Holy Spirit. The parousia will terminate the mission period, which began with Pentecost. Since the parousia could be any

moment, the eager eschatological expectation gave the early church a sense of urgency. Admonishing the believers at Rome to live soberly, Paul writes, "The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here" (Rom. 13:11-12). In the light of this, Paul could not afford the extravagance of mission duplication and competition that often marks contemporary missionary enterprise. He made it his ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not yet known (Rom. 15:20).

The return of the Lord also communicates a time of stewardship accountability with attending reward or punishment. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ," Paul writes, "that each one may receive what is due him" (2 Cor. 5:10). Stott (1992, p. 373) adds, "The reason why we seek to persuade people of the truth of the gospel is that we stand in awe of the Lord Jesus and his tribunal, before which we will one day have to give an account."

The foregoing sixfold christological salvific event constitutes the primary foundation of our Evangelical missiology. We proclaim the incarnate, crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ, who is present among us in the Spirit and who is taking us into his future as "captives in his triumphal procession" (2 Cor. 2:14, NEB).

The commission of Christ

True discipleship is obedience to Christ. He himself says, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). With regard to mission, Jesus simply says, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). His commission, therefore, and loving obedience to the same, becomes the second foundation for Evangelical mission. As

mission was central in the mind of Jesus, so it was in the minds of the apostles. The next verse (John 20:22) makes it abundantly clear that the granting of the Holy Spirit is primarily to enable the disciples to fulfill their mission in the world, just as Jesus was enabled to fulfill his. Michael Green (1970, p. 72) comments, "The apostolic church were quite clear that God's gift of his Spirit was intended not to make them comfortable but to make them witnesses."

So compelling was the charge that Paul said, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16). Yet Paul's obligation depends not upon a legal command as such, but upon his love for Jesus and in keeping with Christ's example. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 he writes, "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

Ajayi Crowther was a slave boy from Nigeria who was rescued from a slave ship by a British boat in Sierra Leone. He became a Christian and immediately started missionary work in that country. In 1842, through the help of the Church Missionary Society of the Church of England, he received theological education in England, was ordained and consecrated a bishop in the Anglican church, and later returned to Nigeria, where he served as a church leader and missionary statesman. It was he who single-handedly translated the Bible into the Yoruba language in 1864. Crowther would always sign his episcopal letters with the phrase, "In loving obedience to the Master."

If Jesus is inexplicable apart from his mission, his church is equally inexplicable apart from its mission. If God the Father was to Jesus, "He who sent me," then Jesus

is to his church, "He who sent us." If any were to ask us why we proclaim the gospel to the poor, freedom to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and release to the oppressed, our response should be simple: because we are sent. Stott (1978, p. 450) rightly states: "An introverted church, pre-occupied with its own survival, has virtually forfeited the right to be a church, for it is denying a major part of its own being. As a planet which ceases to be in orbit is no longer a planet, so a church which ceases to be in mission is no longer a church."

The composition and character of the Triune God

Evangelicals are in general agreement that mission arises primarily out of the nature not of the church but of God himself. The Reformer John Calvin referred to John 3:16 as the whole gospel in a capsule. In this verse we see God the Father, who by nature is love, taking the initiative in mission vis-à-vis sending his one and only Son as a missionary to redeem lost humanity. Implied also in the verse is the activity of the Holy Spirit, the executive officer of the Godhead, who alone brings conviction upon sinners and causes faith to be born in them, resulting in salvation. It can be said in the words of Richard Bowie (1993, p. 61), "Evangelism is theocentric." George Peters (1972, p. 57), the late Professor of World Missions at Dallas Theological Seminary, used to say, "A rethinking of our missionary premises is imperative. Not the welfare and glory of man, not the growth and expansion of the church, but the glory of God forms the highest goal of missions—for of him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be glory forever."

In this concept of mission arising primarily from the nature and character of God, John Stott (1975, pp. 15-34) sees

room for a biblical synthesis of mission: a marriage of the evangelistic and social responsibilities of the people of God. In another volume, after extensive treatment of biblical texts dealing with the calling and sending forth of the patriarchs, the prophets, and the apostles (not to talk of the mission of the Messiah), Stott (1978, p. 445) makes his characteristic passionate call for global Christians. He says, "I pray that these words 'all the families of the earth' may be written on our hearts. It is this expression more than any other which reveals the living God of the Bible to be a missionary God. It is this expression too which condemns all our petty parochialism and narrow nationalism, our racial pride (whether white or black), our condescending paternalism and arrogant imperialism. How dare we adopt a hostile or scornful or even indifferent attitude to any person of another colour or culture if our God is the God of 'all the families of the earth'? We need to become global Christians with a global vision, for we have a global God."

In his book, *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, Dr. Mark Shaw has examined the history of Christian witness in Africa through an understanding of the Triune God. Borrowing from H. R. Niebuhr's threefold kingdom of God principle,⁴ Shaw (1996, pp. 292-295) divides the last 2,000 years of church/mission history in Africa as follows:

"1. The kingdom as the sovereign reign of God. In the first 1,500 years of African Christianity, the dominant witness to the kingdom was through theocratic institutions of church and state. The assump-

tion of the theocratic model is that the presence of God's rule is experienced through the institutionalizing of divine law.... In more recent years, the civil religion of Afrikanerdom reflected this witness to the kingdom.... Modern-day prophets in Africa such as Isaiah Shembe have done the same.

"2. The kingdom as the redemptive rule of Christ. Three primary models to the redeeming power of the kingdom can be seen in the African past:

"a. The transformational model witnesses through the building of Christianized societies.

"b. The inner model ... such as the Revival Movement of Uganda and the Charismatic Christianity of W. F. Kumuyi's Deeper Life Bible Church of Nigeria.

"c. The 'heavenly' model, which emphasizes not the individual piety of the soul, but the spiritual communion of the church on earth with the church in heaven through prayer and the sacraments.

"3. The kingdom as a coming utopia of justice. Common to each variant is the emphasis on the kingdom as bringing about human liberation and human fulfillment within time.

"a. The subversive model ... e.g., Alice Lenshina's Lumpa church in Zambia and a host of liberation movements.

"b. The utopian model ... advocates are more optimistic about a new world order being established through the efforts of sincere and committed Christians, e.g., Beyers Naude and Desmond Tutu.

"c. A third group emphasizes the future character of the coming kingdom. Tertullian, conservative Evangelical groups

⁴ H. R. Niebuhr (1937) advocates three elements in the kingdom of God. The first is confidence in the divine sovereignty which, though hidden, is still the reality behind and in all realities. Second, in Christ the hidden is now revealed and is affecting the lives of believers. Third, all life is directed to the coming of the kingdom in power.

associated with Lausanne, and older Pentecostal theology.⁵

That there is a fervency in indigenous missionary movements in Africa within the past 30 years cannot be denied. Numerous evangelistic operations have been launched in different parts of Africa. Calculated to reach Africa for Christ, these efforts include New Life for All (Nigeria), Operation Good News (Nigeria), Here Is Life (Kenya), Operation Joshua (Kenya), Operation Samson's Fox Fire (Zimbabwe), and GO Festivals (Zambia and Nigeria), to name a few. Side by side with these efforts have arisen hundreds of indigenous missionary societies, such as Calvary Ministries or CAPRO (Nigeria), Christian Missionary Foundation (Nigeria), and The Sheepfold Ministries (Kenya). There seems to be a serious spiritual awakening sweeping across college and university campuses throughout Africa (thanks to various student ministries). Thousands of young graduates are moving out for Christ, following the path of the "Cambridge Seven." We can learn from these young missionaries what it means to live by faith, to live simply, to labour in adversity, to carry the cross, and to persevere. With an estimated force of over 25,000 African missionaries today, both in Africa and in the rest of the world, it can be rightly said that missions in Africa is approaching an epidemic level to the glory of God.

In addition to the three fundamental foundations for Evangelical missiology discussed above—the Christ-event, the commission of Christ, and the character of God—three other motivations for mission among Evangelicals are the human crisis, compassion for the lost, and vision.

Time and space do not permit their discussion here.

Global Realities Facing Christian Missions

Decline of Christianity in the West

The most striking reality facing Christian missions in the world today is the decline of Christianity in the West, largely caused by a deadening, anti-Christian, humanistic, secularist philosophy. It is disheartening to see church buildings being converted into cinema houses and entertainment centres in Europe. More and more young people in the West are committing themselves to Eastern mystery religions and cults such as Transcendental Meditation, Hare Krishna, Yoga, and New Age. In his *World Christian Encyclopedia*, David Barrett (1982, p. 7) states that the massive gains Christianity made across the Third World throughout the 20th century are being sadly offset by an average loss of 7,600 Christians leaving the church daily in the West. After extensive research, George Peters (1972, p. 57) said, "I do believe that Europe, to a great extent, is an unevangelized continent." In the West, people now speak of a post-Christian era. The implication of this situation for Christian mission is that it makes Western missionary enterprise open to suspicion in the non-Western world.

Religious plurality

While religious plurality has been part of sociological ordering for the church in Africa and Asia for centuries, the phenomenon is comparatively new in the West. It can be said that the church in Africa has

⁵ It is interesting to note that Shaw did not include the classical mainstream Evangelicals under the auspices of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA) in his classification. Their position is the typical dialectics of "now and not yet." They advocate bringing justice to the nations together with soul winning, without the utopia of establishing a new world order.

lived and borne its witness in the midst of vigorous rivalry and opposition of Islam and African traditional religion. More than that, the church in Egypt and Ethiopia has survived for the past 2,000 years. Equally, the church in Africa south of the Sahara continues to grow numerically (though admitting some syncretistic tendencies).

The point here, however, is the rapid spread of Islam in Europe and America today. It is reported that France has more Muslims than Protestant Christians. Supported by petrol dollars, Islamic organizations are undertaking massive major projects all over Europe and America. All this should be of missiological concern for the church as a whole. One implication is learning from the church in Africa and Asia and partnering with their missionaries who have been raised in the context of religious plurality.

Global hostility

There is an air of global hostility against the West in general and the United States in particular. The feeling extends to Western eco-political systems and institutions and comes in various garbs. Sometimes it is strictly religious, as in the case of Iran under the late Ayatollah. Sometimes it is ideological, as in the case of Libya and the pre-Glasnost Russia. Sometimes it is economic, as in the case of the former colonies who are clamouring for debt relief. In many of these nations, visas and work permits are not readily granted to Westerners, especially those serving as traditional church-planting missionaries.

One can add to the above sketch such issues as economic recession, international terrorism, and general moral decadence. Rather than becoming easier, Christian mission enterprises in our day are becoming more difficult, risky, precarious, and expensive. The only way forward as we cross over into a new millennium is to engage in partnership. Before we con-

clude this essay with a call for global partnership, let us take a quick look at some of the advantages and handicaps for African missionaries.

African Missionaries

Advantages

Prime among the advantages for African missionaries is the lack of a record of cultural imperialism. Africa has no history of socio-political and cultural expansionism. On the contrary, we were colonized. Our application for visas and work permits in any country of the world cannot be denied on the basis of our historical record of political ambition. In fact, African nations are wooed by both East and West. Chances are that black African Christians applying to live and work in any country of the Islamic bloc, for example, may be denied on the basis of lack of economic support rather than because of political grouping.

Equally, the history of Africans in diaspora (in North America, Europe, West Indies, etc.) has demonstrated the high degree of cultural adaptability which is one of the chief pre-requisites of cross-cultural missions. Africans do not break easily under adversities. They have outlived the sugarcane plantations of America and have made homes out of a "wilder-ness." I have no reason to think that African missionaries will not thrive in other lands. Wherever one goes, be it the extremely cold country of Greenland or the isolated islands of New Zealand, one finds Africans in pursuit of education or hunting for treasures. Such energy can and must be used for missions.

On the labour market, it is still cheaper to employ Asians and Africans than Westerners. This is true in the Christian ministry in Africa. One of the Kenya daily newspapers, *Daily Nation*, carried a feature article on the missionary involvement

of the church in Africa in its July 28, 1985 issue. In what the reporter described as the “church come of age,” the article narrated a tripartite arrangement between the Anglican Church in Zaire (now Congo) and the Church of the Province of Kenya (Anglican) on the one hand; and the Anglican Church in Zaire and the Episcopal Church of North America (also Anglican) on the other. A need for pastors/teachers exists in the Kiswahili-speaking Anglican Church in eastern Zaire. A request for missionaries was sent to the Anglican Church in Kenya, while a request for the support of these missionaries was sent to the Episcopal Church of North America. All three parties agreed, and the contract was concluded. Thus the first set of four Kenya missionaries supported by a North American church went to work in Zaire. It was stated that the support for the four was equivalent to what is needed to support only one American missionary family working in the same setting. Added to this is the cultural/linguistic advantage of these Kenyans.

This doesn’t mean that Africans can finish the task alone. Neither does it mean a call for moratorium on Western missionaries. What it does mean is “togetherness in world missions!” African missionaries working hand in hand with their counterparts from other parts of the world will not only demonstrate the oneness of the church—thus enhancing the credibility of the gospel—but will also correct some of the traditional misconceptions that identified Christianity with the West and saw missions only in one direction. The mission field is the world, and missions flows in the direction of needs.

Handicaps

In spite of the advantages, there are also handicaps for African missionaries. The Christian Missionary Foundation (Ni-

geria) is currently supporting a Kenyan missionary family in Uganda and two nationals in Malawi. The greatest handicap they have faced is getting foreign exchange for funds raised in Nigeria. This problem of foreign exchange is common to almost all African countries.

Equally limiting is the inadequate cross-cultural training available to would-be African missionaries. Most of our existing missionary force are graduates of government universities; Bible colleges and seminaries offering courses in cross-cultural missions have not received adequate attention. It is fitting to create missions departments in our existing institutions, where funds are available to establish schools of missions, such as the African Inland Church Missionary College in Eldoret, Kenya. The West has had rich experience in all these areas and can be an asset to their brethren in Christ.

Matters of logistics, such as travel arrangements, medical needs, children’s education, correspondence, and maintaining contacts with home churches constitute another set of handicaps. In the case of career missionaries, questions of old age and retirement will come into the picture as well.

Global Partnership

The church in Africa needs to work shoulder to shoulder with the church in North America, in Europe, in Asia, and in other parts of the world. No single one of us—regardless of how skilled, gifted, experienced, or rich we may be—can finish the task of world evangelization alone. It will take all of the true Christian church and para-church organizations all over the world working together in obedience to Christ. The size of the task before us demands cooperation. The first man ever to be in space was Major (later Colonel) Yuri Gagarin, who was launched on April

12, 1961. He made a complete circuit of the Earth, landing safely near the pre-arranged position. It wasn't a solo but a team effort. Ever since, the colossal size and intricacies of the space program have demanded and received due cooperation. World evangelization demands more. With about 12,000 people groups numbering over 2 billion people still unreached, no price is too high for world-wide cooperation for evangelism. We salute the pattern of cooperation being forged by the World Evangelical Fellowship, especially its Missions Commission.

Next to size is the seriousness of the sickness of our world. We must not allow science and computer technology to deceive us. Our world is more sick, confused, and paralysed today than ever! Ethical and moral abuses of our day defy numeration. American military General Omar Bradley lamented, "We know more about war than peace today, more about killing than living. Knowledge of science outstrips capacity for control. We have too many men of science but too few men of God. Our world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants but ethical infants."⁶

When AIDS epidemics struck, scientists across ideological divides abandoned their differences to seek a common solution. We must wake up to the fact that a more deadly disease than AIDS has struck: the lostness of millions dying and going to a Christless eternity. This situation was so serious that it brought God down to earth, stripped him of all, and sent him to Calvary.

Once we agree on solid biblical theological parameters, we should not allow anyone or anything to prevent us from

working together to reach the world. Someone has said that the vision Christians need to prompt them for world evangelization is not of heaven but of hell.

As the sickness is serious, so the barriers are severe. In place after place, religious persecution (e.g., in the Islamic states), political hostility, and cultural intolerance are on the increase. Barriers are placed in the way of missions—sometimes by individuals, sometimes by whole societies, sometimes by our own excuses, but ultimately by Satan. Yet there has not been any other time in history when the church has enjoyed the blessing of human and material resources, together with the waves of spiritual renewal to get the job done, as it does today.

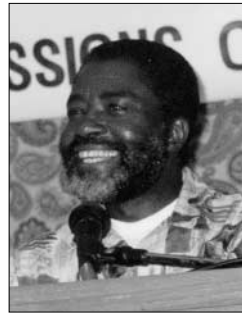
The 700 ways to evangelise the world, as suggested by Barrett and Reapsome (1988), are good and will be effective only after we have gotten rid of what Os Guinness described as the demons of privatisation and individualism. We must become what David Bryant called "World Christians." The commission from above, the cry from beneath, the call from the world (Macedonia), and the compulsion from within all speak one language: *unite for world evangelization!*

The diversity of the world we are sent to reach will require the diversity of our cultural backgrounds and expertise. When in unity of purpose and for the glory of God we marshal together our various diverse gifts, we not only demonstrate the oneness of the body of Christ, thus enhancing the credibility of the gospel, but as the Lord said, the world shall see and believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

⁶ Quoted in *Time Magazine* (1999, Millennium ed., p. 29).

References

- Barrett, D. B. (Ed.). (1982). *World Christian encyclopedia: A comparative study of churches and religions in the modern world, A.D. 1900-2000*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Barrett, D. B., & Reapsome, J. W. (1988). *Seven hundred plans to evangelize the world: The rise of a global evangelization movement*. Birmingham, AL: New Hope.
- Berkhof, H. (1966). *Christ the meaning of history* (L. Buurman, Trans.). London: SCM Press.
- Bosch, D. J. (1991). *Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Bowie, R. W. (1993). *Light for the nations* (2nd ed.). Singapore: Haggai Centre for Leadership Studies.
- Famonure, B. (1994, January-June). Reaching Africa for Jesus. *Vision*, 2(1).
- Green, M. (1970). *Evangelism in the early church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- The Manila Manifesto: An elaboration of the Lausanne Covenant 15 years later*. (1989). Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization.
- Moltmann, J. (1975). *The experiment hope* (M. D. Meeks, Ed. & Trans.). London: SCM Press.
- Niebuhr, H. R. (1937). *The kingdom of God in America*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Núñez, E. A., & Taylor, W. D. (1989). *Crisis in Latin America*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Peters, G. W. (1972). *A biblical theology of missions*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Shaw, M. (1996). *The kingdom of God in Africa: A short history of African Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- SIM NOW. (1992, Winter).
- Stott, J. R. W. (1975). *Christian mission in the modern world*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- . (1978). The living Christ is a missionary Christ. In M. Cassidy & L. Verlinden (Eds.), *Facing the new challenges: The message of PACLA*. Nairobi, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House. [This volume is a compilation of addresses presented at a continental leadership conference called the Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly (PACLA) held in Nairobi, Kenya, December 9-19, 1976.]
- . (1986). *The cross of Christ*. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press.
- . (1992). *The contemporary Christian: Applying God's word to today's world*. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press.



Tokunbob Adeyemo was born to a wealthy Muslim family in Nigeria. Following his miraculous conversion in 1966, he abandoned his partisan political ambition in order to train for Christian ministry in particular and service for humanity

in general. Following his undergraduate studies in Nigeria, Dr. Adeyemo proceeded to the U.S., where he did his master's at Talbot Theological Seminary and his doctorate at Dallas Theological Seminary. He later did post-doctoral research at Aberdeen University in Scotland. In 1994, he was awarded an honorary doctorate degree in theology in recognition of his contribution to Christian higher education, scholarship, and leadership by the Potchefstroom University in South Africa. He has written a number of books, including *Salvation in African Tradition* (1978), *The Making of a Servant of God* (1994), and *Is Africa Cursed?* (1997). Since 1978, he has served as the General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA), as well as the Chairman of the International Council of the World Evangelical Fellowship since 1980. He is married to Ireti, and they are blessed with two sons. The family lives in Nairobi, Kenya.



18

MATTHEW 9:35-38 lays a foundation for the major missionary activities that have taken place in Africa during the 19th and 20th centuries: (1) the ministry of teaching, (2) the ministry of preaching, (3) the ministry of healing, (4) the ministry of prayer, and (5) the ministry of recruiting and sending missionaries. The theory and practice of Christian missions in Africa has revolved mainly around these five major areas.

Response or criticism to the theory and practice of Christian missions in Africa usually addresses the methods, models, theologies, and assumptions about Africa and Africans. Some people dwell on the human weaknesses of the missionaries. Others focus on the socio-political forces that entrapped the missionaries. Still others emphasise the socio-political benefits of the work of Christian missions. The weaknesses and benefits of mission work in Africa must not obscure the *reason* for mission. Any criticism or praise that does not strengthen the divine reason for mission as established by Christ and the apostles does a disservice to the cause of mission in Africa. Criticism, if it is to have value, must be constructive and not vindictive. There is no place for a critical spirit against missionaries and the gospel of Christ.

I confess that I harbored a critical spirit against missionaries for many years. I was a product of African nationalism. I grew up at the time when Africans were fighting for their political independence from their colonial masters. I interpreted the work of Western missionaries from a nationalistic perspective. But I thank God that I was converted and delivered from such a mindset.

Evangelical missiology from Africa: strengths and weaknesses

YUSUFU
TURAKI

My conversion to mission took place in 1981 in the basement of the SIM archives in Scarborough, Ontario, Canada. I had gone there to do doctoral research on the question of British colonial policy, administrative practices, and attitudes towards the Muslim and non-Muslim groups of the northern region of Nigeria. I wanted to know how the British Administration treated Christian missions in northern Nigeria. I found that they did very little in terms of educational and social development of non-Muslim groups. Christian missions did far more than the colonial administration in establishing schools, medical work, dispensaries, health clinics, hospitals, leprosy work, literature work, and translation work in the middle belt of Nigeria.

The massive archival records of missionary activities in the areas of education, medical work, literature work, translation work, and the general development of the people overwhelmed me. There had been over 100 mission stations in Nigeria, and I read the archival records of each. One day in the basement of the archives, I was overwhelmed by the thought of what Christian missions had done for my people, in contrast to what the colonial masters had done. Tears rolled down my face as I was gripped by the anguish and guilt of having had a critical spirit against missionaries and also of not being thankful for what the missionaries had done. I confessed my sin to God in that basement room. I also confessed to some SIM missionaries in a small gathering. The SIM leader turned the occasion into a time of mutual confession. This experience greatly changed my view, my approach, and my relations with Western missionaries and with mission itself. I made a promise to God that one day I would commit what I had found in the archives into writing. I thank God that in 1994, I was able to complete my studies of the work of SIM in

Nigeria. The title of the resulting work is *A Century of SIM/ECWA History in Nigeria, 1893-1993: A Theory and Practice of Christian Missions in Africa*. Most of the ideas developed in this paper are drawn from this and related works.

Biblical and Historical Foundations and Principles

Mission work in Africa has both biblical and historical foundations and principles. We must constantly go back to these for inspiration and motivation.

1. God's will and agenda for the nations. The entire Bible is the unfolding drama of God's will and agenda for evangelising the peoples of the world (John 3:16). If we study the Bible from this perspective, we will be able to draw much inspiration and motivation for mission.

2. Christ's commission to the church. Our Lord Jesus Christ came as the divine fulfillment of God's will and agenda for the salvation of the nations. After laying a solid foundation for mission through the cross, Jesus then commissioned his church to accomplish God's purpose among the peoples of the world (Matt. 28:18-20; John 17:18; 20:21; 21:15-17; Acts 1:6-8).

3. The apostolic example and model. God has revealed models of doing mission work through the activities of the apostles as recorded in the book of Acts. The Pastoral Epistles of Paul give further insight into these patterns of mission. The universal gospel of Christ is to be presented to all peoples as the only means of salvation. New believers are to be established through baptism and discipleship and are to be formed into fellowships. The established churches are to have trained leaders who will multiply the work of mission (2 Tim. 2:1-2; 4:1-5).

The apostles set an example of total obedience to Christ and his commission.

Now the church must act in obedience as the apostles did:

- We must go in total obedience.
- We must witness by our testimony.
- We must make disciples through baptism and teaching.
- We must feed, tend, and nurture through discipleship and teaching.
- We must pass on both the vision and the burden of mission by training leaders for the church.

This last point is especially important. The missionary pioneers were driven into mission work by both a *vision* and a *burden*. We regret to say that some aspects of mission work in Africa today lack both of these qualities. Para-church organisations and mission agencies have done well in keeping the vision and burden of mission alive, but the church, upon which the responsibility of mission ultimately rests, must recapture her first commitment to her Lord. She must be found faithful to her Lord in keeping his commission of mission for the whole world.

Theory and Practice of Christian Missions in Africa

The history of Christian missions has always been an outgrowth of the church acting in obedience to the biblical and historical foundations listed above. The biographies of faithful missionaries over the centuries have always revealed their commitment to these principles. Pioneering missionaries in Africa frequently testified to anchoring their vision and burden for mission in Africa in these truths. Our understanding of the work of Christian missions in Africa must therefore begin from this base.

There were Christian missions that predated the Evangelical missions of the 19th and 20th centuries in Africa. The following periods should be noted in passing:

- Apostolic era
- Patristic era
- Medieval era
- Muslim conquest of North Africa
- Portuguese Catholic missions in Africa
- Modern Christian missions, 19th and 20th centuries
- Pentecostal movements, late 1970s–1999

Christian missions played a significant role in the transformation of African societies in modern history. Humanitarian ministries included the planting of mission stations and churches; the establishment of educational programmes and institutions; medical work, services, and institutions; literature work, programmes, and institutions; and other forms of spiritual, moral, and social development of peoples and societies. These activities had a profound influence on the nature of church structures, on theology and philosophy, and on the patterns of relationships and approaches to African tradition and culture, Islam, colonial policies, and other socio-political issues.

Planting of mission stations, churches, and institutions

Christian missions used the strategy of founding mission stations, out-stations, churches, and institutions as a means of occupying and entrenching their presence in the vast continent of Africa. Mission stations were the centre of missionary and church activities, and they significantly shaped the emergent church structures. Mission agencies administered churches, institutions, and general missionary activities from the mission stations, and the patterns of church administration, structures, policies, and practices were passed on to the Africans.

The politics of creating dioceses (districts and their headquarters), church of-

fices and officers, and titles of clergy drew extensively from the missionary legacy. The African church today spends much time, energy, and resources on these matters. Schisms, crises, conflicts, and tensions caused by these issues have in one way or another affected most churches in Africa. This phenomenon is part of the legacy which Christian missions left in Africa.

Education ministry

Christian missions established Western education in Africa. Their education programmes included literacy, classes for religious instruction, Sunday school and catechism, elementary and primary education, teacher training and secondary education, and theological education and training. The bulk of educated civil servants and professionals in Africa today had their humble beginnings in mission education programmes. Christian missions pioneered education where the colonial governments could not provide such benefits for their subjects.

The major contributions of Christian missions in the area of education include literacy; social, moral, and spiritual upbringing; and general development of the peoples and societies. Education was the most powerful tool for the transformation of African societies and also the most effective tool for evangelism. Research reveals that more people became Christians through the mission ministry of education than by any other means.

Although Christian missions undertook Western education programmes, most did so very reluctantly. Theological or Christian education was more favoured than general (secular) education. Most missionaries during the pioneering periods were against intellectualism and modernity. This stance affected the quality and policies of mission education. Education for some mission societies was nar-

rowed down to the popular three R's (reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic) together with Bible knowledge; anything beyond these was considered worldly. The fear of too much education, of modernity, and of worldliness dominated mission education policies and adversely affected the concept of education and its administration by the missionary church in Africa.

The government take-over of mission and church schools in many African countries after independence was motivated by the assumption that a mission or church cannot provide "neutral" education; missionary education was thought to be nothing but Christian "propaganda." This dualistic concept of education as both "secular" and "spiritual" affected both state and church policies towards education across Africa. After the state take-over of schools, many churches turned their focus to theological education.

A holistic Christian approach to all aspects and disciplines of education must be developed—and not only theological or spiritual. This is a great task that awaits the African church in the 21st century.

Medical ministry and services

Christian missions began medical ministries where colonial governments had no adequate medical services or institutions for their subjects, especially in the remote rural areas. They built health clinics, dispensaries, maternity homes, and hospitals. They also developed leprosy services and built eye clinics and hospitals. Just as in the field of education, the colonial governments needed the help of Christian missions in this area. The missions contributed immensely to the state of health and the social well-being of the peoples of Africa in general.

Both medical and education activities were regarded by Christian missions as secondary to the gospel of Christ. They were simply tools for evangelisation and

church planting and were never viewed as an integral part of the gospel. This led to the dichotomy between “word” and “deed,” “spiritual” and “social.” This dualism affected the holistic gospel approach to the total man and woman.

As in the area of education, the government in some African countries took over the medical work and services from the missions and churches. This reflected the belief that the church should limit its activities to what is “spiritual”; what touches on politics, economics, social concerns, etc., should fall under the purview of the state.

Today, the government medical sector in most African countries is struggling, as is the education sector. If the church is to meet the needs of Africa’s people in the 21st century, it must go beyond a dualistic worldview and the impediments of the missionary legacy.

Literature ministry

Christian missions established literature and translation work in many parts of Africa. They reduced African languages to writing and analysed their structure. They then printed, sold, and distributed Christian and general literature through their translation work and bookshops. They also introduced Christian journalism. By developing social critics, they greatly influenced nationalist movements.

The preoccupation of Christian missions with what is “sacred” as opposed to what is “secular” led to their ambivalent approach to social, cultural, political, and economic issues. These areas were seen as “off limits” for any literature being produced. Anyone who wanted to get involved with these issues had to do so outside of the church. The contributions of missions to these areas were mainly indirect in nature or consequential to mission policies.

The bulk of Christian literature pertained to spiritual needs. Very little was written on how the church, Christianity, Christians, and the Bible addressed or should address other issues. Serious biblical and theological reflections on these subjects were lacking. A Christian worldview of culture, religion, politics, economics, ethnicity/race, etc., still needs to be fully developed by the African church.

General social formations and transformations

Christian missions have done more to bring about social, religious, and human development and change than any other human agent in Africa south of the Sahara. As with educational and medical ministries, from the beginning, social and human services were viewed as auxiliary to the gospel of Christ. They were only a means to share the gospel and were not ends in themselves. In spite of any limitations or weaknesses on the part of Christian missions in their theory and practice of missions, as pioneers they made substantial contributions to nation-state building and to modernising African societies.

Christian missions had clear goals and objectives, which made them pioneers and social reformers. This pioneering and reforming spirit is lacking in the African church today. We may ask what agenda the church in Africa today has for society. If the church is to be relevant in the 21st century, this area must be addressed.

Overall, the work of Christian missions achieved the following in Africa:

- Rapid growth of Christianity.
- Firm establishment of the church.
- Educational development.
- Spiritual, social, political, and material uplift.

Emerging Issues of the Western Missionary Model in Africa

Western cultural baggage

European expansionism and colonialism can be seen as a gradual historical process from the Age of Discovery (explorers), to the Age of Mercantilism (merchants and traders), to the Age of Missions (missionaries), to the Age of Empire Building (colonialists). Colonialism is quite distinct from missions, even though both were products of the same society and shared the same socio-political roots, worldview, and ethos. They differed from each other in their primary motif, goals, objectives, and interests.

We must distinguish between emigrant or European cultural Christianity and Evangelical missions. Emigrant Christianity was a by-product of the European spirit of expansion and colonisation of the world. In essence, it was merely an exportation of emigrant culture, religion, and civilisation. Missions, on the other hand, were primarily driven by the spirit of Christ's Great Commission and by other religious forces such as revivals. The contrast must be kept in focus; otherwise it is easy to fall into the fallacy of lumping together both missions and emigrant Christianity as having been propelled by the spirit of colonialism.

We must admit here that it is not always clear as to where, when, and how a line of differentiation can be drawn between colonialism and some missions. With most Evangelical missions, the motif of missions was quite distinct, but sometimes it may have come under the influence of the prevailing cultural and colonial milieu. Also, for most mission agencies, the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel were the ends of Evangelical mission, but this was not always the case.

The prevailing Christian and social worldviews of the European and North American societies shaped the type of Christianity and also the church structures which missionaries planted in Africa. Because of this influence, we must examine these worldviews as we search for an authentic, relevant, and effective Christianity and church structure for modern Africa. It is also important that we adequately assess the instruments of both social and religious change. The impact of such changes in Africa can be properly evaluated only in light of the philosophy and methods that were used.

There are many missionary practices, beliefs, assumptions, and models of change in Africa which are no longer relevant today. The earlier general negation of African culture and personality has robbed African Christianity of some basic and valuable African foundations, which African Christians want to recover but which are somewhat lost to history. Some basic features of African societies such as the family unit, marriage, kinship, social and communal morality, ethics, and justice have been lost to modern secular forces which are hostile to African society and Christianity. Christianity in modern Africa is facing many crises, and it seems unable to cope with them because certain African features were not utilised in establishing Christianity in African soil.

Western culture has introduced dualism and individualism as ways of seeing and interpreting life, as opposed to the traditional African and biblical holistic view of life. The biblical and African concepts of community and communal life must be recovered and developed by the African church. In addition, the quest for authentic Christianity in Africa must examine all aspects of missions in an African setting. This approach should lead to a reconstruction of a Christian worldview which is relevant and effective in Africa.