

Theme:
Kingdom, Church and World

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KINGDOM, CHURCH AND WORLD

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Editorial

Kingdom, Church and World

In these days we need to view the mission and work of God in the largest possible context. The articles in this issue are intended to assist us in this dynamic task. The opening article, by Bertil Ekström (Brazil) originally presented to the 11th WEA General Assembly, is a timely reminder of the basic teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God with an emphasis on its application to the church. In our second, Johan Ferreira (Australia) takes us into the realm of eschatology and its relation to the catastrophic theories of scientific cosmology to demonstrate the radical nature of biblical hope in the ultimate transformation of all things.

We then turn to a different kind of universal context with Thomas Oden's (USA) explication of the variegated milieu of early Christianity, showing how much it was seated in African and Asian, rather than European, environments. This paper was presented to the August 2002 joint WEA Theological Commission /FEET conference. Turning to the recent context, Leonarda de Chirico (Italy) evaluates trends in Roman Catholic/Evangelical relations.

Finally, Tom Sine has updated his presentation to the 2001 WEF Globalization conference drawing attention in a striking fashion to the dramatic changes taking place now (and into the future) in the contemporary global context, exploring 'how the rapid movement of peoples into a

new one world economic order is shaping their aspirations and values in ways that are often at counterpoint to the aspirations and values of God's kingdom'. The result of this, he argues, is that these 'changes in our values are not only undermining the vitality of believers and the larger church but also the capacity of the church to carry out its mission in our new global future.' His challenge is that we should 'rediscover the theology of the kingdom of God as an alternative cultural dream to the western dream as a springboard to enable believers to create lifestyles, time styles and celebration that look more like the kingdom banquet than the global economic order'.

In the light of the wide ranging topics in this issue, his vision is one that must surely attract us all: 'I am sure we would be surprised at how God could use our mustard seeds not only to reverse many of [these] trends ... but to bring a new period of expansion of God's kingdom globally.'

David Paker, Editor

The Kingdom of God and the Church Today

Bertil Ekström

Keywords: Nations, history, salvation, social action, eschatology, Christology, society, Satan, Holy Spirit, Body of Christ, missions, community.

It is an immense privilege to have this opportunity to share the Word of God this morning during the 11th General Assembly of the World Evangelical Fellowship. Many important and well-known scholars and leaders have occupied this platform before me along the years, and I do not feel worthy to be in their company. At the same time I understand the challenge given by God and I thank the leadership of WEF that graciously gave me this honour.

I pray that God's holy and eternal word shall be made alive for us once again, as his international church, here represented by people from so

many nations, organizations, denominations and local churches.

The Kingdom of God

The theme for the meditation this morning is the kingdom of God and the church today. Both concepts, the kingdom and of the church, have roots in the Old Testament. Both have been discussed by the theologians and by the grassroots constituency throughout the history of the Christian era, and there would be a lot to mention about these discussions. But let us begin with saying something about the kingdom of God—the *Basileia tou Theou*.

Definition of Kingdom of God

The Old Testament background for the concept of kingdom is expressed in several texts where the Hebrew words *Malekut* (reign) and *Malak* (king) are used. The use of the terms tells us about a kingdom and a king of a divine nature, in contrast with other nations and rulers. The kingdom of Yahweh is often mentioned in

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the Psalms and in the later prophets (Psalms 47; 93; 96; 97; 99; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 46:18; 48:15; 51:57; Daniel 7:14,27). Yahweh has become King—the Lord reigns! In Judaism the emphasis is laid on the idea of the Lordship of the Messiah (Isaiah 9:7; 11:1 ff). *Malekut* is much more the power of the king than the locality, being in the beginning more political and later in the understanding of Judah more eschatological. For us the text of Daniel 7 is a key to understanding our passage in Revelation 11:15

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (Daniel 7.13,14).¹

In the New Testament, *Basileia* follows the idea from the Old Testament and only God the Father and Christ are given the full right to the title King.² *Basileia* is more frequently used in the Synoptics and in the book of Revelation, but occurs even in the letters of Paul and in John's other writings.

If we look to the history of the church and the theological discussions we will find many different ways to define the kingdom of God.

To take just a few examples:

- Augustine, one of the early Fathers, identified the kingdom with the church. As the church grows, the kingdom grows and is extended in the world;
- Some Protestant theologians have taught a modified form of this interpretation, holding that the kingdom of God may be identified only with the true church, i.e., the professing church;
- One more optimistic version holds that it is the mission of the Church to win the entire world to Christ and thus transform the world into the kingdom of God;
- Adolf von Harnack, reduced the kingdom of God to the subjective realm and understood it in terms of the human spirit and its relationship to God;
- C.H. Dodd teaches that the kingdom has entered into time and space in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, being the absolute, the 'wholly other';
- Albert Schweitzer defines the kingdom as an apocalyptic realm to be inaugurated by a supernatural act of God when a new heavenly order of existence begins. It is, for him, altogether future and supernatural.³
- The theologians of the Liberation Theology would define the kingdom of God as this world totally and globally transformed in its political, social and economic structures. Leonard Boff, one of the main

¹ The text used is the NIV—New International Version.

² B. Klappert, 'King, Kingdom', in Colin Brown, (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2 (Exeter: Paternoster, 1975), p. 378.

³ The examples are extracted from George E. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), pp. 13-23.

Liberation theologians, criticises the traditional approach to the kingdom of God as being a gnostic spiritualised view. He means that the kingdom is here and now but needs to be transformed through a total liberation from evil.⁴

We could continue finding other definitions of the kingdom of God; maybe all of them, or at least the majority, would give us some insights into the issue, but not a full understanding—probably that is impossible. If the disciples of Jesus had a hard time to understand the meaning of the kingdom and asked the wrong question on their graduation day, it looks as if we have had the same problem during the history of the church. Too often we have mixed it up with human values and earthly paradigms.

What we perhaps could agree on, based on the Scriptures, is that the kingdom of God is:

- A present spiritual reality;
- An inheritance bestowed upon God's people at the Second Coming of Christ;
- A realm into which the followers of Jesus Christ have already entered; and
- A future realm that we will enter when Christ returns.

Summarising G.E. Ladd's definition:

The Kingdom is a present reality (Mt. 12:28) and yet it is a future blessing (I Cor. 15:50). It is an inner spiritual redemptive blessing (Rom. 14:17) which can be experienced only by way of the new birth

(John 3:3), and yet it will have to do with the government of the nations of the world (Rev. 11:15). The Kingdom is a realm into which men enter now (Mt. 21:31), and yet it is a realm into which they will enter tomorrow (Mt. 8:11). It is at the same time a gift of God which will be bestowed by God in the future (Luke 12:32) and yet which must be received in the present (Mark 10:15). Obviously no simple explanation can do justice to such a rich but diverse variety of teaching.⁵

John Bright says:

It lies at the very heart of the gospel message to affirm that the Kingdom of God has in a real sense become present fact, here and now. In the person and work of Jesus the Kingdom of God has intruded into the world.⁶

And he continues:

It becomes clear that the Kingdom of God in the New Testament must be understood in a two-fold aspect: it has come and is even now in the world; it is also yet to come. In the tension between the two the Church must live, and must always live, as the 'eschatological community'.⁷

The Norwegian missiologists Berentsen, Engelsviken and Jørgensen, in their excellent book *Missiology Today*, describe the kingdom of God as having both a soteriological and an eschatological perspective. In the 'salvation' concept they include the preaching of the gospel but also the social action. They say:

The saving power of the Kingdom of God is also active in the mission of the apostles, in a battle not 'against flesh and blood, but against authorities and powers, ... against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms' (Eph. 6:12). The emphasis of the Gospel on the relation between the

⁵ Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p.18

⁶ John Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), p. 216

⁷ Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 237

⁴ Daniel Guimarães, *Teologia da Libertação* (Rio de Janeiro, Brasil: JUERP, 1984), pp. 68,69.

commission given to the disciples and the Kingdom of God lays this extensive soteriological perspective on the Christian mission for all times. To the proclamation of the Gospel belongs the liberating and reliving deeds of love.⁸

About the eschatological perspective they conclude:

The eschatological perspective of the Gospel is basically marked by the tension between the Kingdom of God already present in Jesus, and the fact that it will be revealed fully when the Son of Man comes on 'the heavenly clouds'.⁹

The centrality of the theme in the teaching of Jesus

The Lord's prayer, 'your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' (Mt. 6:10) is one of the many examples of the emphasis laid by Jesus on the kingdom. And there is no doubt about the centrality of the kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus. It is a Christological message. Origen said once that he (Jesus) is an '*autobasileia*' though whom God works.¹⁰

Rene Padilla, making a comment on that, says:

Ultimately the Gospel is Himself (both his person and his mission). The key for understanding the Gospel of Jesus lies in the dynamic interpretation that the term kingdom (*basileia*) has. The Kingdom that Jesus proclaims is God's power active among men in his own person and work.¹¹

⁸ Jan-Martin Berendtsen, Tormod Engelsen, & Knud Jørgensen, *Missiologi Idag* (Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 1992), pp. 182,183.

⁹ Berendtsen, *Missiologi Idag*, p. 183.

¹⁰ Origen, Commentary on Matthew, book 14, section 7, quoted by René Padilla, *Guds Rike och Kyrkans Uppdrag* (Örebro, Sweden: Bokförlaget Libris, 1988), p.17.

¹¹ Padilla, *Guds Rike och Kyrkans Uppdrag*, p.17

Jesus made himself the subject of his preaching on the kingdom of God and it is impossible to separate Jesus, the Messiah, from the gospel of the kingdom. He was fully aware of the meaning and the content of his mission. The reading of the prophet Isaiah at the synagogue in Nazareth was a clear declaration of mission as king (his mission statement) giving the priorities of his reign:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has *anointed* me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. (Luke 4:18,19).

Even if Jesus was not concerned about titles and human position, he declares his royalty several times—for example, when the disciples of John came and asked if he was the Messiah they waited for, and in the judgement process against him before Pilate and the Sanhedrin. (Mt. 11:5; 26:63,64; 27:11).

Characteristics of The Kingdom of God

What characterises the kingdom of God according to the New Testament? We could spend much time talking about the different aspects of the kingdom, but I want to mention a few of its distinctive characteristics as I understand the teaching of the New Testament.

- The kingdom is God's absolute reign, not a geographic territory—Mt. 18:1-4;
- The kingdom is Christ centred—Eph. 5:5; Mt. 25:31 ff; Acts 2:36;

- It is a reality in the present era but will be manifested in a perfect and complete way in the future. Several of the parables of Jesus speak about the tension between the present and the future (Mt. 13; Mark 10:30; Eph. 1:21);
- The kingdom, to the human eye, can appear insignificant today but it can have a strong impact on the society depending on the action of the church and its members (Mt. 13:31-34);
- The kingdom tells us about the total and final victory over Satan, sin and the death. We can take part of this victory through the new birth in Christ, being born into the kingdom. That demands a radical conversion based on a conscious decision to follow Christ (I Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 20:1-7; Mt. 5:20);
- The result of being a citizen of the kingdom is salvation and eternal life. The kingdom belongs also to the citizens—the followers of the king Jesus (Rev. 5:20; 22:5);
- The kingdom of God has principles and values that must be followed and lived out by the disciples of Christ. The ethical and moral standards are high, and nothing less than a search for holiness, perfection and justice is accepted. A holy nation! (1 Peter 2:9; Mt. 5:20; 7:21; 18:3; 19:23; 23:23);
- Citizenship in the kingdom is not according to human values and criteria (Mt. 5:3,10; 25:34; Luke 6:20 ff);
- People can reject the kingdom today, but one day ‘every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord’ (Phil. 2:9-11; Daniel 7:27);
- The gospel of the kingdom must be proclaimed to every people, tribe, tongue and nation, so that all people have the opportunity to glorify God and get to know the plan of salvation. Through the proclamation of the kingdom its principles and values of the kingdom will also be spread (Acts 8:12; 28:31);
- The church is not the kingdom but an agent of the kingdom in the world (1 Peter 2:9).

Present and yet not

Perhaps the biggest problem for us is the fact that the kingdom is not totally present and seen in our days. I suppose that most of us long for the day when the kingdom will finally be installed. The ‘already and yet not’, a classic term in the neo-evangelical theology, explains the theoretical tension but there is not always response of the heart. I believe that the kingdom could be much more present in our midst if we as a church and as Christians were aware of the power of the kingdom and of the importance of sharing Christian values. A hindrance for a greater impact of the kingdom of God in our society has been our incapacity to present the real gospel, the heart of the Christian message, free from all our ecclesiastic and cultural baggage. It has been hard for many people-groups to understand how the gospel has something to do with their history, tradition and culture, or, in what way the Christian message has

an answer for their present needs. One day there will be no doubt—the king Jesus is the Lord of all and the kingdom belongs to born-again people from all nations, cultures and tongues.

Our text

The text from the book of Revelation chapter 11 verse 15 that is the starting point for our meditation says:

‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever’.

We could spend much time analysing the text, very rich as it is. I just want to come back to the text before entering on the theme of the church so we do not think that the text was only a pretext and to apply some of the thoughts about the kingdom to it. For John, the author of the book of Revelation, the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth as in heaven is a central subject. The ultimate rule of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, God’s anointed to be the king for ever, is the liberating message for the human race and for all creation being freed from sin, death and the devil once for all (Rev. 12:10-12), or as it is written on his robe, ‘The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords’ (Rev. 19:6,16).

Our text says, ‘the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ’. The kingdom of this *kosmos*. *Kosmos* can mean the universe, or the world in terms of the sphere or place of human life—the earth, or humanity. Guhrt defines *kosmos* in the writings of the apostle John as ‘the world of men that constitutes a uniform subject which opposes God in enmity,

resists the redeeming work of the Son, does not believe in him, and indeed hates him’.¹²

I believe that John includes both the creation and the creature, both the earth as the habitat of people and mankind. The whole *kosmos* is longing for freedom and relief (Rom. 8:18-22). But even if the prince of this *kosmos* still rules (John 12:31), the final victor is Jesus Christ (John 16:33).

It is interesting to look at the tense of the verb ‘to become’. In the original text it is in the past tense ‘aorist’, meaning that it is a consummated fact. There is no doubt about the victory of Christ over the enemy and that it has already happened. The kingdom is already *present* based on an event which occurred in the *past*, giving guarantees for the whole *future*. He will reign for ever, for ‘*aiónos*’, for all eternity!

The Church of Christ

It is also important for us today to look at the church and how the community of believers fits into the whole issue of the kingdom of God. Again, it is impossible to deal with all the different aspects that could be interesting to discuss when we talk about the church. We have a task force in the Missions Commissions working with that issue and I hope that we can present something more substantial in a few months.

God’s creation of the Church

I believe that the church is God’s idea and creation. We have, of course,

¹² J. Guhrt, ‘Earth’, in NIDNTT, vol 1, p. 525.

the Old Testament background where a nation was formed to be the channel for blessing for the whole mankind. In Jesus, the second Adam, a new race was created, forming a new people described by Peter as: 'a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God' (I Peter 2:9). The initiative comes from God himself. The church is not a human invention to build an institution that takes money from people and gives jobs to those who cannot do real work.

Even if someone does not agree that the church was born on the day of Pentecost, there is no doubt that it was the Holy Spirit that made, out of the group of disciples, a community that started growing and became the early church. If we follow the history of that first church narrated in the book of the Acts, we can see the continuous initiative of God, through his Holy Spirit, making his church more and more international and pluri-cultural. (Acts 2; 13:1-3).

The spiritual and sociological nature of the Church

The church is in its essence spiritual. Peter says: 'As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (I Peter 2:4). As we all know, 'spiritual house' (*oikos pneumatikos*) is the spiritual construction that God is making. We are, as individuals, temples for the Holy Spirit, but also stones in the whole spiritual building.

But the church has also a sociological nature. One of the terms used especially by Paul is that we are 'the Body of Christ'. 'Body' tells us about relationship, dependence, and unity in the diversity with mutuality (I Cor. 12). Christ himself is the head and we are members of his body. The community of believers, another way to define the church, based on the description of the church in Jerusalem, gives us a lot to think about in terms of the social dynamic among the Christians.

Howard Snyder defines the church as body, community and people:

The Church is the Body of Christ, the community of the Holy Spirit, the people of God. It is the community of the King and the agent in the world of God's plan for the reconciliation of all things.¹³

Bo Nylund says:

The Church is a community that is called to serve the Kingdom, to build the Kingdom and to show the signs of the Kingdom.¹⁴

The missionary nature of the Church

The church has also a missionary nature. Quoting Peter again,

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, *that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light*'. (The RSV says, 'declare the wonderful deeds'). (I Peter 2:9)

¹³ H. Snyder, 'The Church in God's Plan', in Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne (eds.), *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Third Edition) (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999), p. 141

¹⁴ Bo Nylund, 'Kyrkobegreppet i Latinamerikansk Befrielseologi', *Svensk Missionstidskrift* (Uppsala, Sweden, 1989) 89/10, p. 5

Johannes Blauw is radical when he comments on this text. He says:

'What does this mean if not that the Church of Jesus Christ only has the right to call itself 'Church' if it is a missionary Church?'¹⁵

Blauw gives a strong emphasis on the Greek term *hopôs* ('so that'—translated in the NIV by 'that you may'), affirming that this word indicates exclusive finality. The church is 'a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a people belonging to God' with the exclusive purpose of proclaiming the gospel. Certainly, we have other texts that show us that the mission given to the church is broader than just the proclamation. But I believe that we still need to stress the fact that the church has the responsibility for the expansion of the kingdom and a vocation given by God to spread the Good News of salvation to all. The whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole man in the whole world.¹⁶

The expansion of the Church in the world today

Christianity is the only religion that is really global. There are very few countries in the world where the Christian church has not been established. At the same time there are hundreds and thousands of people groups that are not reached with the gospel. Missionary work is still an unfinished task. The concentration of foreign missionaries is still very high in the areas where the church is

already strong and growing. Only a small percentage of the missionaries are working where the real needs are. We receive every day new missionaries to Latin America and we have a hard time to send out as many Latin Americans to other parts of the world as we receive, just to try to maintain a balance. Maybe Latin America is not the most needy place in the world for evangelism just now, although we still have unreached indigenous tribes and one or two countries with a very low percentage of evangelical Christians. I wish we could be more strategic and wise in our sending of missionaries, especially those who have the resources and the people so they can chose the place where to send them.

But the Christian church is growing. In Latin America we have nations where almost half of the population professes the new birth in Christ. But have we seen any changes in those countries in terms of social justice, human rights, ethical and moral standards, end of corruption and of violence? Very little. Why?

I think Orlando Costas had the answer:

The issue seems to me to be not whether the church is growing, but whether it is authentically engaged in the mission of the triune God in its concrete socio-historical situations. It is a matter of efficacious participation in the ongoing life-struggles of society in a total witnessing engagement, which, more than a program or a method, is a lifestyle. For when this happens, the church is turned upside-down. It becomes a living organism, a dynamic training and research centre, and an effective team that is capable of leading multitudes to Jesus Christ. In such circumstances, the church is turned inside-out; its structures are put at the service of

¹⁵ Johannes Blauw, *A Natureza Missionária da Igreja* (São Paulo, Brazil: ASTE, 1966), p. 129.

¹⁶ Theme of the Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization in 1974.

the kingdom and its missionary practice is transformed into a comprehensive endeavour, where the gospel is shared in depth and out of the depths of human life'.¹⁷

So, perhaps, our problem, at least in Latin America, is not so much whether we grow or not. The main issue is that we grow in quantity but not very much in quality. A deeper understanding of the discipleship must follow the expansion of the church.

The growing number of believers must signify a greater influence in the society. The big churches and the mega-churches can be good, but if they do not advance the kingdom of God and are occupied only with advancing their own private kingdoms, we have gained very little for the present age and maybe also for the eternity.

The expectations on the Church from the world

There are high expectations on the church today. Even the governments count on the church for helping to solve the problems of the society. Of course, there are many exceptions and nations where the church has no or very little chance to influence. But in many of our countries we have the access and the opportunity to take part in the daily administration of a neighbourhood, a city or even a state and a whole nation. We have people here that can witness to that.

The main question is, are we willing to give up some of our taboos and prejudices? Can we agree that

Karl Marx was wrong when he said that the religion is the opium for the people, meaning that the church led people to forget their daily life, thinking only of a heaven in the future? Or shall we continue to reinforce our inferiority complex that we cannot do anything because there are such strong powers at work in the economic and political world arena that no one, not even God, can change the course of this planet?

Ladd says about the challenge of church in bringing forth the kingdom:

The evil, demonic powers that the church must face in the eschatological consummation are in principle no different from the autocratic power that the church has had to face in secular states throughout her history.¹⁸

Lets us keep this challenge in mind and go on to see the relation between the kingdom of God and the Church.

The Relation between the Kingdom of God and the Church of Christ

The Church as the agent of the Kingdom

A question that arose early in the church was the equivalence or not between the kingdom of God and the church of believers in Christ.

Johannes Blauw states:

In the New Testament the Church is never presented as equivalent to the Kingdom of God, but it is also true that they are never presented as opposites to one another. The Church is not the Kingdom but its

¹⁷ Orlando Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982), p. 54.

¹⁸ Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 161

manifestation and form. The Church is the sign that the new future broke forth in the world.¹⁹

Rene Padilla has the same view:

The church is not the Kingdom of God, but it is the visible result of the Kingdom. The church still carries the signs of the historical presence of the Kingdom, the signs of the 'not yet' that impact the present age.²⁰

Charles Van Engen chooses to call the church the 'branch' or the 'filial' of the kingdom.²¹

Verkuyl says about the relation between kingdom and church:

The Kingdom is, of course, far broader than the church alone. God's Kingdom is all embracing in respect of both point of view and purpose; it signifies the consummation of the whole of history; it has cosmic proportions and fulfils time and eternity. Meanwhile, the church, the believing and active community of Christ, is raised up by God among all nations to share in the salvation and suffering service of the Kingdom. The church consists of those whom God has called to stand at His side to act out with Him the drama of the revelation of the Kingdom come and coming.²²

As I see it, the kingdom is not only the church, even if the church belongs to and represents the kingdom on earth and in history. The church is not merely an instrument but an agent of transformation of the kingdom, having the responsibility to make the kingdom visible. People

looking at the church must see the kingdom in action and the church has to advance the kingdom among all nations making disciples of Christ.

Snyder advocates the use of the term 'agent':

I purposely speak of the Church as the agent of the Kingdom, rather than merely as a sign or symbol of the Kingdom or as an inanimate tool in God's hands.²³

So, today it is the Body of Christ, the community of the King, that makes the kingdom visible, attractive and present in our fallen world. We are, says Peter, the royal priesthood, priests of the kingdom, with the same double function that the priests in the Old Testament had: to be a channel for God's blessings to all nations, and to be intercessors for the redemption of every person and every nation.

The Church integrated in the society representing the Kingdom

Only by taking an active part can we influence this process. Jesus is very clear to his disciples when he prayed for them and when he taught them about their relation to the world.

Jesus prayed:

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world (John 17:15-18)

It has been hard for us to understand how the Christian church could be integrated into society without being infected by the sinful mind of

¹⁹ Blauw, *A Natureza Missionária da Igreja*, p. 79

²⁰ Padilla, *Guds Rike och Kyrkans Uppdrag*, p. 33

²¹ C. Van Engen, *Povo Missionário, Povo de Deus* (São Paulo, Brazil: Edições Vida Nova, 1996), p. 133

²² J. Verkuyl, quoted by Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), pp. 185, 186.

²³ Howard Snyder, *The Community of the King* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1977), p. 13.

this world. The truth is that we have been much more influenced by the mentality of the world through passivity than if we had taken the initiative to really impact and actively fight for transformation of our societies. I could mention more than one case in Latin America where we have seen an active local church making a difference in the neighbourhood and in the whole city. Is it done overnight? No, it takes time, patience, courage and a lot of dependency on the Holy Spirit to see a city or a neighbourhood changed for the better.

Maybe it is only we Latin Americans that run away from difficult situations. It is much easier to sit, or stand, in the temple and sing great hymns of praise for God's victory and how he will judge and win over his enemies. I do not know about you, but especially our charismatic churches, and I belong to one, love to sing songs of spiritual warfare using military texts from the Old Testament. The real war against the devil and his demons is not done only through spiritual exercises in singing and praying, but also, and especially, in the daily battle taking part in the society standing for the values and principles of the kingdom.

And that leads us to the next point.

The impact of the Church in the society defending the Kingdom values

Valdir Steuernagel, says in his commentary on the song of Mary, The Magnificat:

The kingdom of God represents a reality of hope precisely because it embraces the lonely, comforts the despairing, takes care of the abandoned, protects the exploited,

liberates the oppressed, raises up those who are discriminated against, and chooses Mary as the blessed one. In God's kingdom there is no room for a social, economic and political practice where the place at the table of decisions, of brotherhood and of food is made according to the criteria of having (the rich), of knowing (the proud), and of power (the powerful). The best way to understand the kingdom of God and how its dynamics work is to look at the life of Jesus—the things he said and did.²⁴

Roger Hedlund reminds us that:

The two tiny parables of salt, 'You are the salt of the earth' (Mt. 5:13), and light, 'You are the light of the world' (Mt. 5:14-16), emphasize witness in society through kingdom living. The scope of this witness and influence is worldwide. Jesus intended for his followers to take his teachings seriously and practice them in all ages. Otherwise, these two sayings are meaningless.²⁵

The disturbing question remains, Why do we not see more influence of the Christian witness in our world today? Is the kingdom of this earth to be converted to the kingdom of Christ only an eschatological hope? Or can we expect that Christ can reign and his kingdom be a reality, even in a limited way, already here and now? Must we wait until Revelation 11:15 is fully fulfilled, when Jesus Christ has been finally enthroned in the eternal kingdom or can we suppose that the church today can be an agent of transformation in our societies, so that Jesus begins already to reign in our nations and that the signs of the kingdom are visible for our generation?

²⁴ Valdir Steuernagel, *I Sing of Hope*, (Monrovia: MARC—World Vision, 1993), pp. 73-74

²⁵ Hedlund, R. *The Mission of the Church in the World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), p. 175.

The Challenges for the Church in the 21st Century

To sum up some of the thoughts during this meditation, I want to mention a few challenges I feel are crucial for the credibility of the church today:

To be relevant for our historical moment

The gospel, preached by the church today, must be relevant for the historical moment in which we live. How can we expect to be respected, trusted and believed if we do not present a message, based on the Bible, that has to do with the needs of people? The diverse situations in the world today demand a new whole new openness and flexibility from the church. We cannot live in the illusion that the same good theology done by great Germans, Swedes, Americans and others, will function and be of relevance for other parts of the world.

We need also to address the real issues of our time both in a more global aspect like the globalisation, post-modernism, secularism, religious encounter, suffering, poverty, and so on, but also the issues that are important for the different regions, nations and localities.

If we fail to present the gospel of the kingdom for the young generation independently where they live, we will see a much stronger growth of New Age, Spiritualism, and even of other religions in our societies. And we will also condemn our teenagers and children to a world without any hope and with very little of influence of the kingdom values.

To take seriously the missionary vocation

Secondly, the 'chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation, people belonging to God' exists to declare and proclaim the salvation plan of God. We must have the realistic view of the kingdom that I believe the Bible has. Heaven is not here, at least not before the return of Christ. The kingdom will not fully come to this earth, and we will never see human societies transformed in such a way that they could replace heaven. But God has a plan, a way of salvation made possible through the work of Christ. Only by faith in Jesus as the only Saviour and Lord have we access to the kingdom. There is no other way. That means that the church must take the missionary vocation very seriously today, both in the North and in the South. At the same time that we see the missionary movement growing in the new sending countries, there is a tendency to stagnation and decrease in the old sending countries. Do we still believe in the North that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation and that a personal commitment to him is necessary for participation in his kingdom?

Let me quote from the Lausanne Covenant:

We affirm that there is only one Saviour and only one gospel, although there is a wide diversity of evangelistic approaches. We recognise that everyone has some knowledge of God through his general revelation in nature. But we deny that this can save, for people suppress the truth by their unrighteousness. We also reject as derogatory to Christ and the gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies. Jesus Christ,

being himself the only God-man, who gave himself as the only ransom for sinners, is the only mediator between God and people. There is no other name by which we must be saved.²⁶

Jun Vencer summarises the Mission of WEF as 'the total mobilisation of churches and Christian organizations to work together and to share resources in discipling every nation for Jesus Christ'.²⁷

To defend the principles of the Kingdom of God in a holistic way

Thirdly, we are challenged by God to defend kingdom values and principles in every nation and situation through a true discipleship.

If I may quote Jun Vencer again, as he presents the vision of WEF in the following words:

The vision of WEF is to see the world reached for Christ. It is to disciple every nation where there is a vital Christian witness, justice for all, diminishing poverty among the poor, and where lasting peace is enjoyed by people.²⁸

The Lausanne Covenant affirms also:

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.²⁹

Real discipleship involves more than good theories and change of

terminology. It is a whole change of mentality, a *metanoia*, according to the mentality of Christ. (Rom. 12:2; Phil. 2:5). The fact that the kingdom will not come in fullness on this earth does not give us the right to give up the effort of bringing it to every society and nation. That does not mean that we need theologies that are a defence of the opulence of the rich, nor a theology that fights only for the political and economical liberty of the oppressed. These kind of theologies are based on the assumption that the kingdom is merely earthly. What we need to do is to struggle for the coming of the kingdom, the implantation of the values and the principles of the kingdom, knowing nevertheless that the final establishment of the kingdom of Christ is an eschatological reality.

The church must defend and struggle for the issues of restoration of individuals, families and nations. Christians must be paladins of peace and reconciliation, of release from political oppression and freedom from spiritual bondage, of social justice, of equality between races and gender, of concern about the environment and of religious liberty. I believe that we must go back to the synagogue of Nazareth and listen to the mission statement Jesus gave for his kingdom.

A conquering Church—defeating the Enemy in every nation, area of life and society!

Jesus said to his disciples when they had recognised that he was the Christ, the son of the living God, that 'on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not over-

²⁶ The Lausanne Covenant, point 3: 'The Uniqueness and Universality of Christ.'

²⁷ J. Vencer, 'On the Vision of WEF' in W. Harold Fuller, (ed.) *People of the Mandate* (Grand Rapids: WEF and Baker), p. 196.

²⁸ Vencer, 'On the Vision of WEF', p. 196

²⁹ The Lausanne Covenant, point 5: 'Christian Social Responsibility.'

come it' (Mt. 16:18). The church is a conquering church. The church should not run away being afraid of the enemy. On the contrary, it is the church that conquers new territory, that invades the reign of evil and that releases people from the slavery of sin. Again, we must lay aside our inferiority complex, the feeling that we are like 'grasshoppers before Nephelins' (Num. 13:31-33).

To proclaim the final coming of the Kingdom in its fullness.

Ultimately our hope is for the final and definitive establishment of the kingdom of God. We do what we can and pray that the Lord does what he wants to for the advancing of the kingdom in the present era, but we know that only when Jesus Christ returns will the kingdom be seen in its fullness and perfection. The Christian hope is an important message for people today. The humanistic and the optimistic standpoint by which we can transform this world into a heaven is gone. But there is light at the end of the tunnel. The kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ in its full sense.

Conclusion

Lesslie Newbigin, concludes his commentary on the proclamation of the kingdom of the Father and the mission of the church, saying:

Mission is faith in action. It is the acting out by proclamation and by endurance, through all the events of history, of the faith that the kingdom of God has drawn near. It is the acting out of the central prayer which Jesus taught his disciples to use: 'Father, hallowed by thy name, thy

kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as in heaven'.³⁰

In these last years we have, focused very much on ecclesiology in our local communities and in our denominations and organizations. We need to see the bigger picture, the kingdom of God. Only when we realise that we belong to the same kingdom will we have conditions for real partnership and collaboration. What does it say in your ecclesiastical passport—Baptist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Anglican, Lutheran, Independent? We are citizens of the same kingdom, and Jesus Christ is our king. Let us continue to pray together 'Your kingdom come' anticipating the final day of establishment of the kingdom of Christ through an active, sacrificial, wholehearted involvement in the advance of the kingdom of God in our days.

One day the future will be present. The kingdom will come in its fullness and we will take part of the chorus that sings:

'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power for ever and ever! (Rev. 5:13).

³⁰ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 43

Cosmological and Biblical Eschatologies: Consonance or Dissonance?

Johan Ferreira

Keywords: Science, theology, eschatology, messianic hope, Day of the Lord, apocalypse, new creation, kingdom of God

Introduction

There has been an increasing interest in the fascinating relationship between science and theology during the last two decades. One stimulus behind this lively interest is the emerging sense of consonance between the two disciplines.¹ Today many scientists and theologians are arguing that the historical breach between science and theology is unhealthy. Instead, science and theology complement one another as both try to understand the universe,

albeit from different perspectives. This turn around in the prevailing mood has been most dramatic. In 1966, Barbour wrote, '... most writers today see science and religion as *strongly contrasting enterprises* which have essentially nothing to do with each other.'² In marked contrast Charles Townes, Nobel Laureate, in an article in *Science* in 1997 wrote, 'Many scientists today believe that the two [i.e. science and religion] can not be separated.'³ However, does this sense of consonance remain when it comes to eschatology? In this paper I will point out that cosmological and biblical eschatology clash quite starkly. Does this clash justify the historical breach between science and theology, or could this

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¹ See for example the stimulating essays in Ted Peters (ed.), *Science and Theology: The New Consonance* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998).

² *Issues in Science and Religion* (New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row), p. 1.

³ Also see Townes's article 'Logic and Uncertainties in Science and Religion' in *Science and Theology: The New Consonance*, pp. 43-55.

apparent dissonance be resolved? I will focus most of my attention on the biblical text.

Cosmology

Cosmology has proposed several scenarios for the end of the universe. They generally depend on the idea that the universe began with a massive explosion, the so-called Big Bang. That the universe had a beginning is one of the logical deductions from the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which states that entropy (disorder) either increases or stays the same in a closed system.⁴ The Big Bang initiated a massive expansion of the material universe from a point of singularity with the stretching of space at phenomenal speeds into the enormous universe that we observe today. According to cosmologists, this suggests two basic scenarios for the end of the universe. The universe may either continue to expand and eventually cool down as entropy reaches a maximum, or it may re-collapse under the forces of gravity into a Big Crunch.⁵ In the first

scenario the universe will become lifeless as it cools down, also called Heat Death. Most cosmologists regard this scenario as most likely. In the second scenario, if the gravitational forces within the universe gain the upper hand, the universe will crash into itself crushing all existing galaxies, explosion will become implosion.⁶ The universe itself may cease to exist.

However, life on earth would already have ceased long before either Heat Death or the Big Crunch since it is very much dependent on the sun which has a life span of about 10 billion years. With the death of our sun, about another five billion years away, all life will cease to exist. Another more likely and more imminent scenario for the destruction of life on earth is the threat of a foreign body impact. Cosmologists and geologists estimate that this happens about every 30 million years and that an impact is already overdue.⁷

⁴ See Alan Lightman, 'The Second Law of Thermodynamics' in *Great Ideas in Physics* (New York, N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 2000), pp. 59-115. The detection of background radiation of very low intensity running uniformly from all directions echoing an enormous explosion, and the redshift observations of Hubble indicating an expanding universe, are regarded by scientists as providing evidence for the Big Bang. R. E. Peacock, *A Brief History of Eternity: A Considered Response to Stephen Hawking's A Brief History of Time* (Eastbourne: E Sussex: Monarch, 1989), pp. 106-110.

⁵ See Paul Davies, *The Last Three Minutes: Conjectures about the Ultimate Fate of the Universe* (New York, N.Y.: BasicBooks, 1994); and F. Adams and G. Laughlin, *The Five Ages of the Universe: Inside the Physics of Eternity* (New York, N.Y.: The Free Press, 1999).

⁶ Stephen Hawking argues in his influential book, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (London: Bantam Books, 1988), that the universe had no beginning and will have no end. In fact, a similar view was already propounded by Aristotle—the universe is an unchanging entity. Hawking argues for the possibility that the universe has no boundary, and therefore there is no need for a creator to explain its existence. However, Hawking still recognises that even if his theory is correct, many *why* questions still remain to be answered; as Polkinghorne and Stannard have pointed out, the existence of the laws of physics must still be explained. Hawking's hypothesis has not been widely accepted. David Wilkinson, *God, The Big Bang and Stephen Hawking: An Exploration into Origins* (Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1993), pp. 87-88.

⁷ See Paul Davies's imaginative description and discussion of this scenario in *The Last Three Minutes: Conjectures about the Ultimate Fate of the Universe* (New York, N.Y.: BasicBooks, 1994), pp. 1-7.

Therefore, the picture that cosmology paints for the future of the earth is one of devastation. In all these scenarios the earth, and eventually the universe itself, are heading toward a catastrophe that will extinguish all forms of life. In other words, at least from the human perspective, the future is quite pessimistic.⁸

Biblical Eschatology

Biblical eschatology on the other hand presents a much more optimistic picture. The Bible does not predict a catastrophic end to life but rather anticipates a new era of well-being and prosperity.⁹ The contrast between cosmological and biblical eschatologies cannot be greater. How, then, does biblical eschatology picture the distant future?

A look at the term *eschatology* already begins to answer this question. The term does not occur within the Bible but is used as a technical term within the discipline of systematic theology. It is derived from the

combination of two Greek words, *eschatos* meaning 'last' or 'end', and *logos* meaning 'word' or 'doctrine'. Therefore, based on its etymology, and also reflecting popular understanding, it means the doctrine of the end or the doctrine of the last things. However, from a biblical perspective, an important qualification needs to be made. The Bible does not speak of the *end* of the world as if the world and the universe will one day cease to exist.¹⁰

In a marked contrast to cyclical conceptions of history and cosmological scenarios of a catastrophic end, the biblical writers describe history as linear, as moving towards a positive goal. 'God is driving history towards ultimate fulfilment of his purposes for creation and his people as a whole.'¹¹ In depicting the future the verb *ml'* meaning 'to be full' or 'to fill' is used in connection with the fulfillment of prophecy (cf. Josh. 24:45[H 43]; 23:14; 1 Kings 8:56; 2 Kings 10:10; 1 Sam. 1:23; 15:11,13; 2 Sam. 7:25; Ezek. 12:25,28). In prophetic contexts it is

⁸ Polkinghorne writes on the predictions of cosmology, '...., one way or the other, the universe is condemned to ultimate futility, and humanity will prove to have been a transient episode in its history.' *Science and Christian Belief: Theological Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker* (London: SPCK, 1994), p. 162.

⁹ The noun *šlum* (peace) is often used with respect to the future state of God's people and is one of the most important theological words in the Old Testament, occurring more than 250 times. The term has the general meaning of 'completion and fulfillment—of entering into a state of wholeness and unity, a restored relationship.' Harris, et. al., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), II, 93. Cf. Gen. 15:15; Lev. 26:6, Num. 6:26; Ps. 29:11; 37:11,37; 72:3,7; 85:1,8; 122:6-8; 125:5; Is. 9:6-7; 26:12; 32:17-18; 54:10,13; 55:12; 57:2,19; 66:12.

¹⁰ The Old Testament term for 'end' *qš* refers to the destruction of a people, often occurring within the context of judgment, or to the end of a specific period of time, rather than the cessation of existence, cf. Gen. 6:13; Ezek. 7:1-2; Dan. 8:17; 11:35,40; 12:4,9,13; Amos 3:15; 8:2. In the NT the term *telos*, usually translated 'end', refers to the eschatological era of fulfillment, cf. Mt. 24:6,14; Mk 13:7; Lk 21:9; 1 Peter 4:7; 1 Cor. 10:13; 15:24; Mt. 10:22; 24:6,13,14; Mk. 13:7,13. The term *eschatos* ('last', 'utmost', 'end') is also frequently used in an eschatological context, cf. Mt. 12:45; 19:30; Jn. 6:39,40,44,54; 11:24; 12:48; Acts 2:17; 1 Cor. 4:9; 15:8,26,45,52; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb 1:2; James 5:3; 1 Jn 2:18; Jude 18; Rev. 1:11.

¹¹ R. J. Bauckham, 'Eschatology' in *New Bible Dictionary*. 2nd ed. (Leicester, England: IVP, 1982), p. 342.

mostly a positive term.

On the other hand, it is significant to note that *klh*, which also means 'to fulfill' or 'to accomplish', but which has the secondary meaning of 'to cease' or 'to perish', is not used to describe the future. According to Harris, 'The basic idea of this root is "to bring a process to completion".'¹² Therefore, from a biblical perspective, when we deal with eschatology we are not dealing with the 'end', the cessation of existence, or even with the destiny of individuals, but rather we are dealing with the destiny of God's people with which the destiny of the whole cosmos is linked.

Old Testament Eschatology

Old Testament faith was from the beginning very much a forward-looking faith.¹³ The first chapters of Genesis depict the hope of a future era in which God's peace, lost in antiquity,

¹² *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), I, p. 439. The process which is brought to an end may be positive (Gen. 2:2; Num. 7:1; 1 Kings 6:9), but mostly it has a negative meaning (Lev. 26:44; Is. 1:28; Ezek. 4:6; 6:12; 7:8; 13:15).

¹³ The Wellhausen school of Old Testament research held that Israel had no real eschatology before the prophets. However, this strict association of eschatology with the prophets has been criticised by later scholars, especially starting with Gunkel and Gressmann. Biblical faith, as far as we can detect, has always had a future eschatological orientation. The patriarchal promises concerning land, posterity, and blessing almost certainly reflect very early traditions. Hence, John Bright could write, '...Israel's faith had always had an eschatological orientation in that it looked forward to the triumph of Yahweh's purpose and rule.' *A History of Israel*. 3rd ed. (London: SCM Press, 1981), p. 452. So too Rowley, 'Throughout the Old Testament there is a forward look.' *The Faith of Israel: Aspects of Old Testament Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1956), p. 177.

would be restored to all peoples.¹⁴ Thus, throughout the biblical record, the faithful were encouraged with the hope of blessing and prosperity to come. This future hope of the individual was very closely associated with the future of the nation. Individual identity was something alien in the ancient world as the future destiny of the individual was closely tied up with the fortunes of the community of which the individual was a member. Therefore, the Old Testament saw the future in terms of the common destiny of the nation. In this way Old Testament eschatology is primarily a corporate eschatology. We will see that this corporate eschatology eventually came to incorporate the cosmos itself. Thus corporate eschatology develops into cosmic eschatology. However, even within descriptions of cosmic transformation, the people always stand at the centre. In this sense biblical eschatology always remains anthropocentric.

Israel's Prophetic Expectation

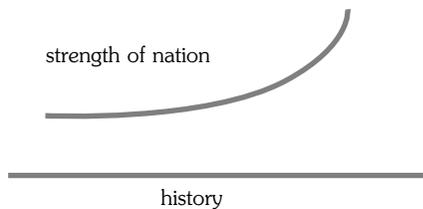


Figure 1

¹⁴ Cf. Gen. 3:15; Gen. 12:1-3.

In order to understand the strong future orientation of Old Testament faith one should remember that Israel was a small conglomeration of clans vying for identity and existence during a turbulent period in the Ancient Near East. Israel was constantly hectored by surrounding tribes competing for agricultural lands in Palestine. In addition, the powerful dynasties of Egypt and Mesopotamia often threatened the political and religious independence of the nation. Not surprisingly, the hero or the hope of the nation came to be the military warrior. Israel's most successful and popular king, David, was eminently a man of war. It was natural therefore for the early Israelites to regard the ideal future as an age when their existence and freedom would be secure from other competing nations. It is easy to understand how the nation came to hope in the military intervention of Yahweh on their behalf. Several texts speak of Israel's God, Yahweh, as a God of war.¹⁵

Therefore, in pre-exilic Israel, future hope was closely tied to the national security and prosperity of the nation. The fulfilment of the promises, mostly that of land, descendants, and rule,¹⁶ was seen within a linear historical framework. They expected that through faithful obedience to Yahweh and under the tutelage of a Davidic king, the national history would eventually reach consummation in an era of prosperity and peace (cf. Figure 1).

However, the harsh realities of civil war and the two exiles shattered this hope. According to John Bright, 'To hope for the continued existence of the nation, or for the coming of an ideal Davidide—perhaps the next one—who would restore its fortunes, was no longer possible.'¹⁷ The Babylonian exile crushed all Israelite hope and caused a crisis in faith. However, out of these historical disasters emerged a more transcendent eschatology expecting a direct intervention of God, which would not only change Israel's situation for the better but would radically transform history itself.¹⁸ The prophets frequently employed the imagery of the natural world to describe the transformation that will take place with the arrival of Yahweh's ultimate salvation.¹⁹ The accompanying judgment is also pictured in terms of the coming of great natural disasters, the melting of the earth, flooding, winds, fire, and darkness. Positively, blessing is portrayed by abundant harvests, regular rains, and luscious vegetation.²⁰ Later, especially in the

¹⁷ *A History of Israel*, p. 452.

¹⁸ The prophets did not merely call the people back to covenant faithfulness—they were not merely guardians of the covenant—but proclaimed a new message of an even greater exodus to come (Is 42:9; 43:18-19). The radical nature of this new proclamation marked a watershed in the development of biblical theology. Between the exodus and the exile Israelite faith had a primarily backward orientation, looking back to the Exodus, the great event of deliverance that defined the identity and purpose of the nation. The corruption of the kings and the events of the captivities coupled with the activities of the prophets changed this perspective towards the future.

¹⁹ Cf. Hos. 13:15; Amos 9:5-6; Joel 1:15-20; 2:10, 30-31; 3:14-16.

²⁰ Amos 9:13; Joel 2:23-24; 3:18.

¹⁵ Cf., Ex. 15:3; Is. 42:13.

¹⁶ Gen. 12:1-3; Dt. 28:1-14; 2 Sam. 7:12-17.

apocalyptic prophecies, it appears that nature itself is going to participate in the transformation that God is going to bring about for his people.²¹ Corporate eschatology now takes on a cosmic significance.

One must grant, of course, that these passages employ metaphorical language to describe the prosperity and blessing that will accompany God's future act of salvation, wanting to create an overwhelming impression of the momentous change that will occur in the future with the present world. However, within the canonical context it is transparent that with these metaphors of nature the writers looked to something that lay beyond common experience. The God who is going to effect the changes was also the one who created the world in the beginning. Something no less than a new creation is envisaged with the employment of these nature metaphors.²²

The Day of the LORD

One of the most important expressions within Old Testament prophetic literature designating future expectation is that of the Day of the

LORD.²³ The expression is used to denote the concept of a future time of blessing and prosperity. Several traditions concerning the Day of the LORD can be detected within the Old Testament. It is certain that the concept associated with the expression underwent many historical transformations.²⁴ Most scholars regard the origin of the expression in some way associated with the notion of holy war.²⁵

Amos, in the eighth century BCE, was the first prophet to use the expression as a major theme. In Amos 5:18-20 the expression occurs three times and is used as a traditional phrase designating coming blessing. Amos, however, turns the concept on its head by stating that it will bring 'darkness, and not light'. It is not going to be a time of blessing, but a time of judgment. It is important to note that the terminology used to describe the Day of the LORD here recalls creation imagery, rather than that of warfare.²⁶ A return to chaos and disorder, like that

²¹ Is. 11:6-9; 35:1-7; 40:3-4; 41:18-20; 43:18-20; 51:9; 55:12-13.

²² So too, according to Donald Gowan, Old Testament eschatology states that three transformations must take place: 1) the human person; 2) human society; 3) and nature itself. *Eschatology in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986). These transformations are well described in Ezekiel 36:22-38. According to Gowan, this pattern occurs on many other occasions and includes everything the Old Testament says about eschatology.

²³ The word 'day' *ywm* in Hebrew can either designate a point of time or a sphere of time. It can denote: 1) the period of light, 2) the period of 24 hours, 3) a general vague 'time', 4) a point of time, 5) a year (in plural). The term also is surrounded by many theological themes related to God's sovereignty and acts of salvation. The expression 'the day when' often introduces events of particular importance in the history of salvation, cf. Dt. 4:32; Num. 15:23.

²⁴ George Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1968), p. 430.

²⁵ According to von Rad, the concept stems from holy war. *Old Testament Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1965), II, pp. 119-125. Also see George Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion* (London: SPCK, 1968), pp. 270-271.

²⁶ Gen. 1:1-5. Commentators often overlook this point.

at creation, is envisaged.²⁷

The concept of the Day of the LORD is also prominent in the New Testament. The most significant reinterpretation that occurs in the usage of the expression is that the Day of the LORD (Yahweh) becomes the Day of the Lord (Christ).²⁸ The Day becomes the year of the manifestation of Christ. As such, the New Testament writers associated the dawn of the Day of the LORD with the 'first' coming of Christ.²⁹ However, the consummation of the Day of the LORD is associated with the 'second' coming of Christ.³⁰

The Apocalyptic Vision

Old Testament eschatology reached its final stage of development in the apocalyptic vision. The prophecies, especially those of Second Isaiah, pointed to a new exodus in which Yahweh himself would come to deliver his people from exile.³¹ In 539 BCE under Cyrus, the Jewish captives were released from the Babylonian exile and allowed to return to the land. Needless to say, this created great expectations for a restored and strong Israel among the faithful:

God was reviving the nation and it would not be long before Israel reached its destiny.

However, the euphoria was short lived. Most Jews did not return to the land. The minority who did return found their hope for a new powerful Davidic state dashed with the harsh realities of the actual conditions. They were but a meagre shadow of their former glory. The depressing situation did not correspond to the great promises. These circumstances lead to the flowering of the apocalyptic vision. The Babylonian exile and the fragile state of the people of Israel after the return caused doubts about the idea of historical theodicy. The return to the land occurred as prophesied by the prophets, yet the expectation of a new and glorious Israel was not realised. Even after the reforms of Nehemiah, the situation remained pessimistic. In other words, history had become a conundrum (cf. Figure 2).

Israel's Historical Experience

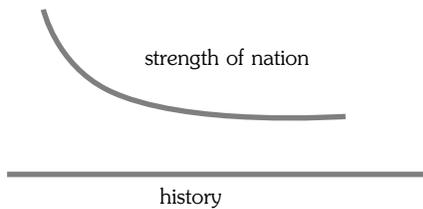


Figure 2

²⁷ Creation imagery is also very prominent in the corresponding passage describing the Day of Yahweh as judgment (Is 2:12-19). Here there are many remnants of the military origins of the expression.

²⁸ Cf. Lk. 17:24; Phil. 2:6,10,16; Rev. 1:10.

²⁹ Cf. Acts 2:20; Rom. 13:13; 2 Cor. 6:2.

³⁰ Cf. 1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10-12.

³¹ But, paradoxically, God is going to bring about restoration not only through the judgment of Israel's enemies but also of Israel itself. This paradox found ultimate expression in the Servant Songs of Second Isaiah.

Hope for the fulfilment of the covenant promises within the natural development of historical processes disappeared. The only solution that could restore hope was for a direct intervention by God into history to change the situation.³² It was no longer possible to expect God's actions of salvation to be accomplished solely through the development of the nation's history. In the words of Russell, 'The apocalyptic literature is an example of the adage that "man's extremity is God's opportunity". It is essentially a literature of the oppressed who saw no hope for the nation simply in terms of politics or on the plane of human history.'³³ Thus, apocalyptic literature was basically a crisis literature.³⁴

The apocalyptic prophets came to the conclusion that salvation can ultimately come only from Yahweh (cf. Figure 3). This picture soon developed into a more dramatic concept of a new age of existence beyond the present. Thus, Bright states, 'Eschatology here appears in a new dimension. What is awaited is no longer a turning point in history, however dramatic—but a new world (age) beyond history.'³⁵ The apocalyptic

movement became the most important theological movement in Judaism during the Hellenistic period and heavily influenced Jesus and the early Christians.

Apocalyptic Vision

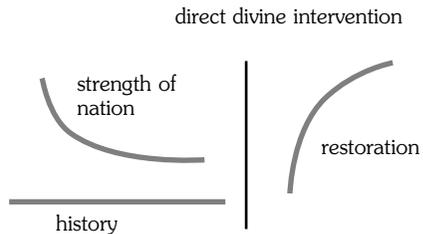


Figure 3

The New Creation

Among the central aspects of the apocalyptic vision is that of the new creation.³⁶ The returning exiles faced great disappointment after most of their expectations for a strong and prosperous Israel were dashed by the hard realities of their historical situation. But within this context arose a vision for a new reality, implying the establishment of a new state of existence—the new creation. The earliest direct reference to the new creation—the 'new heavens and new earth'—occurs in Isaiah 65:17 (cf. 66:22). The verse is located in the visions of Third Isaiah which form part of Old Testament apocalyptic literature and are dated

³² It is here where we see the fundamental difference between prophetic eschatology and apocalyptic eschatology. W. Dumbrell writes, 'Apocalyptic differs from prophetic eschatology (its matrix) only in its emphasis on the coming of the new age, not by historical progression as prophecy may have suggested, but by divine intervention.' *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1994), p. 10.

³³ D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 17.

³⁴ P. D. Hanson, *Old Testament Apocalyptic* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1987), p. 28.

³⁵ *A History of Israel*, p. 456.

³⁶ The resurrection is an aspect of it.

during the Persian period. For the purposes of our discussion, it is important to reflect on the meaning of the verse.

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth;
the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.

Several important grammatical features need to be noted. The passage focuses attention on the activity of Yahweh. The emphasis on the exclamation *hinnî* is correctly translated by Watts as, 'Indeed, look at me!'³⁷ The reader is urged to focus on what Yahweh is about to do. The prophet wants to emphasise that the new order will be brought about by Yahweh's actions alone.³⁸ The usage of the verb 'create' *brh* is exclusively used in the Old Testament for the actions of Yahweh in the sense of creating something new that did not exist before (*creatio ex nihilo*). It is the same word that is used for God's act of creation in Genesis 1:1.

The participle *bw'r* also needs careful attention. It can be translated in several ways. Serving as the main verb within the sentence it may be translated as a future tense in English ('I will create'). However, the participle frequently indicates an action that is on the point of occurring, especially in the prophecies of Second and Third Isaiah. Therefore, the NRSV translates it accurately as, 'I

am about to create'.³⁹

The text makes a contrast with the 'former things'. It has been argued that the contrast is with the past kingdoms of Israel.⁴⁰ However, the clear usage of creation imagery leads us to conclude that the passage should be understood eschatologically, having cosmic undertones. In most eschatological depictions of the future, the description of the new Israel takes the central place, but, as we have seen, Old Testament eschatology sets the new Israel within a new cosmological order of existence. So here too the passage goes on (verses 18 to 25) to employ creation imagery to describe the cosmic transformation that will accompany the restoration of the new Jerusalem. The text envisages a new creation different from that which exists now. In other words, although the vision focuses on the restoration of the new people of God, the cosmic implications of the transformation for the author should be highlighted. The expression 'heaven and earth' is used in the Old Testament to describe the whole created order.⁴¹ Therefore, 'earth' refers to the whole world and not just to the land of Palestine.⁴²

Finally, we need to consider what kind of cosmological order is envisaged here. The term 'new' (*hds*) may be understood in several ways. How-

³⁷ *Isaiah 34-66*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas: Word Books), p. 351.

³⁸ This emphasis already occurs in First and Second Isaiah. The radical nature of what Yahweh is about to do reaches its climax here.

³⁹ Another interesting possibility is to take the participle as expressing the present continuous tense, 'I am creating'.

⁴⁰ Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, p. 354.

⁴¹ Not totality, since that will include God.

⁴² Contra Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, p. 354.

New Testament Eschatology

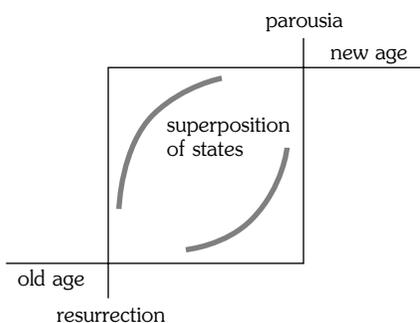


Figure 4

ever, in relation with the verb 'to create' it is best to understand 'new' as referring to something that has not existed before and hence is unknown to this time. This does not necessarily mean that the new creation would have no similarity or resemblance to the old, but the term does imply more than a restoration or a return to an original unspoiled creation.⁴³

New Testament Fulfilment and Expectation

The distinctive character of New Testament eschatology is determined by the conviction that God's decisive eschatological act of salvation is taking place in the new era inaugurated by the coming of Jesus into the world. The preaching of the kingdom of God by Jesus is not only seen as the announcement of a prophetic hope but as the dawn of that king-

dom itself.⁴⁴ Ridderbos states, 'The coming of the kingdom is the consummation of history, not in the sense of the end of the natural development, but in that of the fulfillment of the time appointed for it by God.'⁴⁵ In particular, the New Testament authors regarded the death and resurrection of Jesus as the decisive point in history at which God's kingdom, the new form of existence, enters the world. The old age is being replaced by something new. Therefore, the expression 'the latter days' of the Old Testament has become 'these last days',⁴⁶ and the 'Day of Yahweh' has become the 'Day of the Lord'. The coming of Christ is regarded as the beginning of the new reality envisaged in the apocalyptic vision.⁴⁷ Salvation in the New Testament must come from the Lord.

However, this does not mean that the new order of existence has fully replaced the old. The New Testament still speaks about this evil age in which we live, or as the age which is passing away. This gives rise to the eschatological tension between 'the now and the not yet' (or the super-

⁴⁴ Mk. 1:15.

⁴⁵ *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962), p. 44.

⁴⁶ Heb. 1:2; 1 Cor. 10:1; 1 Jn. 2:18.

⁴⁷ Käsemann was right when he said that 'Apocalyptic was the mother of Christian theology'. Cf. *New Testament Questions of Today* (London: SCM Press, 1969), p. 102.

⁴³ Note Polkinghorne's discussion on *creatio ex vetera* in *Science and Christian Belief: Theological Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker* (London: SPCK, 1994), pp. 167-168.

position of states).⁴⁸ There is still a future anticipation for the 'second' coming (*parousia*) of Christ at which the transformation would be total and complete. It is in this context that the New Testament talks about the passing away of the heavens and the earth and the establishment of a new cosmic order of existence. The material universe is not eternal, but will be replaced with a different order of existence.⁴⁹ The most complete description of this new order of existence is found in 2 Pet 3:10-13 which is based on Isaiah 34:4 and 65:17. Verses 10 and 13 are particularly relevant for us.

⁴⁸ I have borrowed this expression from quantum physics on the basis of Polkinghorne's discussion. 'Quantum theory permits the mixing together of what was classically immiscible. More technically, it is based on the principle of the superposition of states. In plainer terms, quantum theory not only has states in which a particle is located "here" or it is located "there", but also has states which are a mixture of these two.' *Reason and Reality: the Relationship between Science and Reality* (London: SPCK, 1991), p. 86. 'Complementarity, as the quantum physicists call this delicate behaviour, is the scientist's equivalent of the theologian's perichoresis, the mutual indwelling of characteristics.' *Science and Creation: the Search for Understanding* (London: SPCK, 1988), p. 70. These observations by Polkinghorne have huge possibilities for new paradigms of understanding Christian existence in the state of the so-called 'now and not yet'.

⁴⁹ The NT shared this outlook with the many apocalyptic documents of early Judaism (cf. 1 Enoch 91:16; IQH3:32-36; Apoc.El. 3:82; Jub. 1:29; 1 Enoch 45:4-5; 72:1; 91:16; Sib.Or. 5:212; 2 Apoc.Bar. 32:6; 44:12; 57:2; 4 Ezra 7:75; Bib.Ant. 3:10; etc.). Also see Heb. 1:10-12 (cf. Psalm 102:25-27; Rev. 21:1). However, although I am emphasising the fundamental change envisaged by biblical eschatology for the purposes of the present study, we should also be aware that several passages in the NT point to a transformation with continuity (Polkinghorne's *creatio ex vetere*), cf. Rom 8:19-23; 1 Cor 15; etc.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed ... But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

The passage uses the Old Testament metaphors of the Day of the LORD and the new creation and applies them within the context of coming judgment. A radical cosmic transformation is going to take place in the future. This eschatological transformation is pictured as both sudden and unexpected and not in terms of a gradual process of transformation. The verb *parerchomai* (used here in the future indicative) is often used in the gospels to refer to the passing away of the heavens and earth.⁵⁰ These passages emphasise the radical discontinuity between the old and the new.⁵¹ The author is looking for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Again, a drastic transformation of the existing order by a direct intervention of God is envisaged in continuity with the Old Testament apocalyptic vision (cf. Figure 4).

Therefore, although the New Testament affirms that a fundamental change has occurred with the death and resurrection of Jesus, it still looks

⁵⁰ Mt. 5:18; 24:35; Mk. 13:31; Lk. 16:17; 21:33.

⁵¹ R. J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*. Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983), p. 326. Kistemaker also comments, 'With the word new, Peter teaches that this new creation comes forth out of the old creation. That is, the old has given birth to the new.' *Peter and Jude*. New Testament Commentary (Welwyn, England: Evangelical Press, 1987), p. 340.

forward to a more comprehensive and all pervading transformation of creation sometime in the future. This cataclysmic event will introduce a new era of everlasting righteousness and blessing.⁵² The biblical text is, therefore, in the final analysis quite optimistic with respect to the future of the cosmos and the human's place within it. The biblical writers employed various symbols and metaphors to indicate that history is moving towards the goal of a 'new creation'. According to apocalyptic eschatology, final redemption of humanity and the universe will occur through a radical intervention into the cosmos by God.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is clear from our observations that when it comes to eschatology, the relationship between science and biblical faith is one of dissonance. Scientific scenarios of a catastrophic end to the universe are incompatible with the divinely promised new creation of the Scriptures. However, this dissonance should not come as a surprise. When one considers the structure of biblical faith—that salvation can only come from God—one should expect dissonance when we compare scien-

tific scenarios of the end with biblical eschatological expectation. Evolutionary development of the universe according to its internal natural processes does not lead to 'paradise', but rather, without radical divine intervention, the universe is heading towards a catastrophe. In contrast, the hope that biblical faith presents is that God will intervene not only to arrest the natural propensity of the universe towards catastrophe, but also to bring about redemption for the universe and humanity in a 'new creation'.⁵³ Therefore, considered in this light, the dissonance between cosmology and biblical eschatology does not demonstrate incompatibility between the scientific and biblical points of view. Rather it is a case of biblical faith addressing head on the dilemma of the world and the catastrophic scenarios for the future of humanity predicted by cosmology. In other words, in view of cosmological eschatologies, the call to faith and hope is as urgent as ever.

⁵² Cf. Rev. 21, 22.

⁵³ Polkinghorne's comments are to the point, 'The bleak prognosis for the universe puts in question any notion of evolutionary optimism, of a satisfactory fulfilment solely within the confines of the unfolding of present physical process ... An ultimate hope will have to rest in an ultimate reality, that is to say, in the eternal God himself, and not in his creation.' *Science and Christian Belief: Theological Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker* (London: SPCK, 1994), pp. 162-163.

A Patristic Perspective on European Christianity in World Perspective

Thomas C. Oden

Keywords: Colonialization, contextualization, Patristics, Europe, Asia, Africa, Mediterranean, ecumenical consensus, *consensus fidelium*, missionaries, exegesis, multiculturalism

Introduction

The conference theme is *Europe and its Relevance for Christian Theology and Church*. The subject is Europe, the major modifiers are theology, evangelical, patristic, and world. Our issue is: How is the histo-

ry and destiny of Europe pertinent, both as an ancient and modern reality, to worldwide evangelical theology and church life today?

This one theme is being addressed in three ways, by reference to the past, present, and future, so as to embrace a discussion of Europe's theological heritage, its contemporary problems, and its future possibilities. There are four presenters on historical dimensions of European Christianity in world perspective, relating to its patristic roots, Reformation developments, through pietism and the world mission movement, and into the twentieth century.

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My Assignment

My assignment is to discuss the theological heritage of the church fathers, viewed, however, in relation to the general theme of 'European Christianity in World Perspective'. That is, in what ways do the patristic

exegetes, the ecumenical conciliar decisions and ancient creeds impact upon evangelical theology and church life today?¹ How does the patristic tradition weigh in on questions of the fundamental relation of European evangelical theology to world Christianity?

The Holy Spirit worked in the early centuries of scriptural exegesis to form the canon and to provide a reliable and reasonably cohesive commentary on the written word, canonically defined. The Holy Spirit has effectively preserved the apostolic witness and guided its interpretation ecumenically in a way that became firmly consensual in the first five centuries of Christianity. The consensus of the first five centuries stands in stark contrast with the fragmenting dissensus of the last five centuries. That early integration still remains relevant to the future of European and world Christianity.

My own view, as stated in my *Systematic Theology*, volume 3², is that there indeed exists such a common ancient ecumenical consensus, that it can be defined textually, and that it is an enduring work of the Holy Spirit that it still remains serviceable to evangelical exegesis today. It is always subject to contemporary reevaluation and reinterpretation under the guidance of Word and Spirit, but not so as to deny the cen-

tral confession of apostolic truth articulated by ancient ecumenical orthodoxy. The earliest consensual exegetes remain formative for, and a stimulus for, worldwide evangelical witness and experience today.³

I. Unburdening the Burden of Europeanization in World Mission

The burden of Europeanization, Westernization, and colonialization of modern Christian witness remains heavy upon the younger churches of Africa and Asia. That burden is diminished, however, by the simple reminder that *the formative period of biblical exegesis is pre-European*. The earliest layers of Christian exegesis were much closer to Asian and African origins than European. Ancient Christian missions were not tarnished or encumbered by the western colonialism that would specifically accompany modern world missions, because they were pre-western.⁴

God the Spirit powerfully used modern European languages (English, French, German, Spanish, and Portuguese) and thought forms and indeed political assumptions and cultural premises by which to convey to 19th century Asia and Africa the heart of God's action in Jesus Christ.

³ The most widely respected and authoritative early Christian interpreters of scripture who gained general ecumenical consent in the era of the relatively undivided church of the first millennium are available for our spiritual formation. This has profound importance for evangelical theology and witness today world wide.

⁴ I am not here assuming that colonialism was altogether demonic or dehumanizing, or that it was not used by the Spirit for evangelization.

¹ I view this assignment as an exercise in systematic theology, especially its methodological prolegomena, as grounded in exegetical and historical theology, but also as pertaining to contemporary missiology.

² *Life in the Spirit* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992)

These are the languages through which the gospel was channelled and transmitted into much of the two-thirds world. But these are not the languages spoken by the pre-European patristic writers, nor did they make assumptions that correspond with modern western economic, political, psychological or sociological ideologies. The gospel itself and its early orthodox interpreters were antecedent to and thus independent of modern colonialism and all forms of westernization.

What were the languages of the pre-European writers? Look south and east: Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Farsi, the languages of the Indus valley and of coastal India (and not Latin alone). None of these languages of the ancient Christian tradition bears any onus of the westernization that hangs heavy over world missions. The early Christian exegetes were not in the slightest effected or corrupted by modern European thought forms which did not exist at the time of Origen and Eusebius.

If European thought forms are regarded today by some as subversive or debilitating to Christian witness, they need not be the only thought forms through which the gospel is understood. This is a simple and decisive point. The European languages through which the mission of the church was conveyed in the 19th century did not exist in the first five centuries. They may have later skewed the gospel, but they had no effect upon the early ecumenical consensus. For most Christian centuries these modern languages had

no impact whatever upon the *consensus fidelium*. They did not affect the vitality or reach of the Jacobite or Thomas traditions along the silk road and around the gulf of Ormuz into India, nor did they have any effect upon the upper Nile valley or Ethiopia or Nubia when the consensus was formed.

The primary languages of early Christianity were African, Asian, Byzantine, and Levantine. The Latin exegetical tradition did not lead but followed the cultural, literary and intellectual achievements of Greek and Aramaic and Anatolian and Syriac civilizations, even in the high patristic period. Even the church of Rome read its scriptures and practiced its liturgy in Greek in the early Christian generations. Latin as an exegetical language was late coming to Christianity in real force, though it finally did with Hilary and following. Recall that the Latin Bible of Tertullian and Cyprian were translations of the Greek Septuagint. Only much later, long after the formation of patristic consensual exegesis, do we have anything that looks like European civilization, excepting inchoately along the northern Mediterranean coast of what we today call Europe.

Pre-European Christianity: The Older East and Younger West

During the 1990s when I travelled numerous times to India, China and the Near East, I presented a lecture to various audiences on pre-European Christian exegesis. I was in places like Cairo and Delhi and Beijing looking for translators for the *Ancient Christian Commentary* on

Scripture from Greek and Latin to these modern languages. I delivered lectures in Bangalore and Puna on 'Pre-European Christianity: The Older East and the Younger West'. I was amazed at the intensity and warmth of the responses to that argument. I wondered why it had not been pointed out earlier that ecumenical Christianity preceded Europe.

Westerners have allowed the assumption to prevail among Christians in India and China that Christianity is basically a western religion. Entirely wrong. India received Christianity from Asia (not Europe) long before it was even heard of in Canterbury or Paris or Amsterdam. Silk eggs were brought to Constantinople from China in 552 by two Persian missionaries. Christianity came east from Pontus and Armenia and Nisibis to the Phasis and Oxus and Harirud river valleys to Merv and Turkmenistan and down the silk road to China to the upper Yangtze valley, and through the Indus valley and sea routes to India. All this took place while literate Europe was still an embryo in the libraries of Finian and Alcuin and Cassiodorus in Clonfert, Bangor, Paris and Squillace. Bishops from Bactria and India and Persia attended early ecumenical councils. The classic ecumenical consensus was maturely formed well before the formation of Europe. There was not anything literarily to be called Europe or European in any meaningful cultural sense when Anthony was living in the desert or Athanasius was teaching in Alexandria or John Chrysostom was preaching in Anti-

och or Ephrem was writing hymns in Upper Mesopotamia.

It is worth noting how many of the eight doctors of the church were from Africa and Asia: Athanasius and Augustine were African by birth. Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and John Chrysostom were all from the ancient near east—Anatolia, far from Europe. Even among the leading fathers of the west, Jerome, born at Strido in Croatia, spent much of his adult life in Palestine, and Gregory the Great served for an extended time in Constantinople. Since Europe in its Carolignian sense had not yet come into being, and would not palpably emerge until long after the passing of the fathers, none of the fathers can be said to be 'distinctively European' in any mature or decisive sense. One defining point is useful to clarify: When I use the term European, I am pointing more deliberately north of the Alps than marginally to the Mediterranean's northern rim. I am distinguishing between Mediterranean coastal cultures and northern European cultures. In this sense no church father was European.

Consider also the non-European locations of all seven Ecumenical Councils: Nicea in Asia Minor, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon — all beyond the pale of what we today call Europe. Modern Turkey is still trying to get into the European Union. Not one Ecumenical Council met on European soil. And who attended these councils? The predominant leadership was largely African (notably Alexandrian) or Antiochene (Syrian) or Cappado-

cian (central Anatolia). A few came from the margins of the Mediterranean's north shore, but none from any location more than a short distance inland. Far more came from Africa and Asia and as far east as Persia and India than from the Mediterranean coast. The cultures that would later blossom along the Danube, Rhone and Rhine rivers, though marginally represented in ancient orthodoxy, were only beginning to exercise modest influence upon the more powerful east and south.

So how can it be said that ecumenical Christianity in its formative period was predominantly western or European? The 'west' was its outcome, not its premise. This is no minor point. The history of salvation was largely a story that first occurred in the ancient near East and then moved largely from Antiochene Syria to Anatolia and beyond. It was not until Paul's mission took him from Ephesus to Troas and then to Philippi that the European south perimeter was even broached, when 'During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."⁵

When I travel and speak in Africa and Asia, I always remind evangelical friends there that their own lands were introduced to the gospel long before the European west became a learner of those in the east. I pray that Asians and Africans may gain deeper rootage in ancient ecumeni-

cal teaching to help correct western astigmatism.⁶

A sustained conversation with the multi-generational, multicultural *consensus fidelium* will help connect the dots. Westerners are called to listen all the more empathically for the lost accents of the east and south in early Christianity, attuned especially to the neglected and silenced voices not only of the Christian present but also the past. It makes no sense to miss out on the wisdom of the great African tradition of Christian exegetes from Origen and Cyprian through Didymus the Blind of Alexandria to Augustine of Hippo. So with the great early eastern traditions from Aphrahat to Ephrem and Nemesius to John of Damascus. The classic Christian tradition would have been impoverished without these profound African and eastern voices. We are called critically to assess our own American and European cultures on the ground of evangelical testimony that predates both.⁷

⁶ I learn constantly from my own African and Asian students about my western predispositions, made more toxic when I forget it. This is not a feigned display of humility, but the simple awareness that my western perspective must work hard to enter empathically into a pre-European language environment to understand the Word of God, and I pray for the grace of the Spirit to do just that. That calls for genuine, not false, humility.

⁷ Do we risk misnaming as 'classical' or 'ecumenical' what is actually a class-bound, race-bound, gender-bound hegemony? Marxist critics have for decades dismissed Christian theology as ideologically motivated to sustain the economic status quo. Here it must be remembered that the confessors and martyrs were not cultural winners coercing losers. Social location arguments apply most poignantly to those who have power to coerce, not to those who have no power.

⁵ Acts 16:9; Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.*, III.14, ANF I, pp. 437-9.

II. The Geography of Pentecost

The Spatial Map of Pentecostal Power

Empowered by the Spirit at Pentecost, the witnesses move into four quadrants or eight subquadrants of the spectrum of world spaces—they

go in eight directions, only one of which was toward Europe (WNW: Roman proto-Europe). The others were NNW: Byzantine Turkey; NNE: Armenia; ENE: Syriac, Northern Mesopotamia; Southern Mesopotamian; SSE: Arabic; SSW: Alexandrian, Egypt; WSW: North-west Africa.

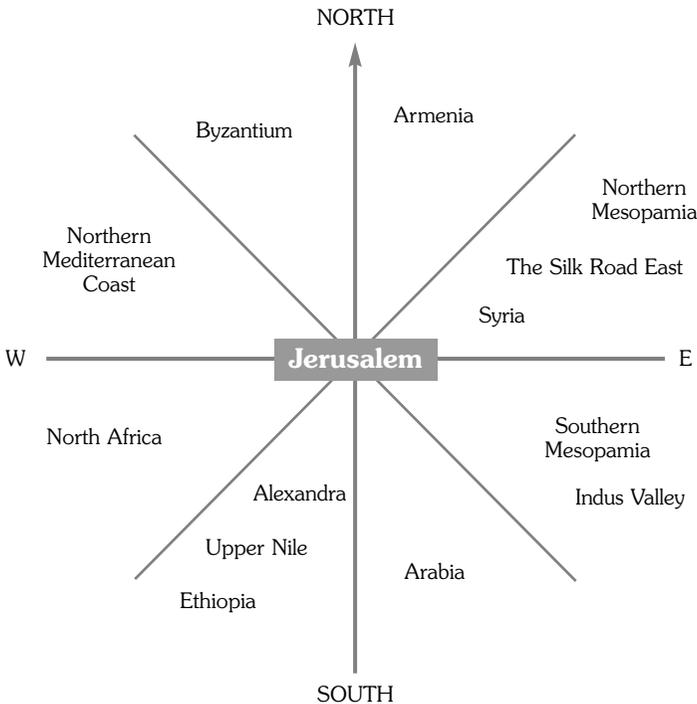


Diagram A

Of the native languages listed in Acts 2:7-11, only one is found in what was later to become continental Europe—and that was Rome. The point: Europe’s major languages-to-be were as yet unformed.

When the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost, he came upon devout Jews from every nation present. Here were Jews at the temple, from all over, having come on a pilgrimage to behold the glory of the Lord.

Note the languages they spoke. They indicate where they came from and where the Spirit was taking them: From the northwest they came speaking not only Galilean, but also there were Asians, Phrygians (Jews from western Asia Minor), Pamphylans (southern Turkey), as well as Greeks from Crete and Latins from Rome. From the northeast quadrant there were Parthian (central Persia), some from the Medes

(northern Iran), from Mesopotamia (today northern Syria and southern Turkey). They were from Cappadocia and Pontus (Jews from northern and central Anatolia). From the southwest they came from as far away as Cyrene of Libia and from Egypt, and Libya. From the southeast quadrant some spoke Arabian and some were Elamites (near the Persian Gulf, today SW Iran).

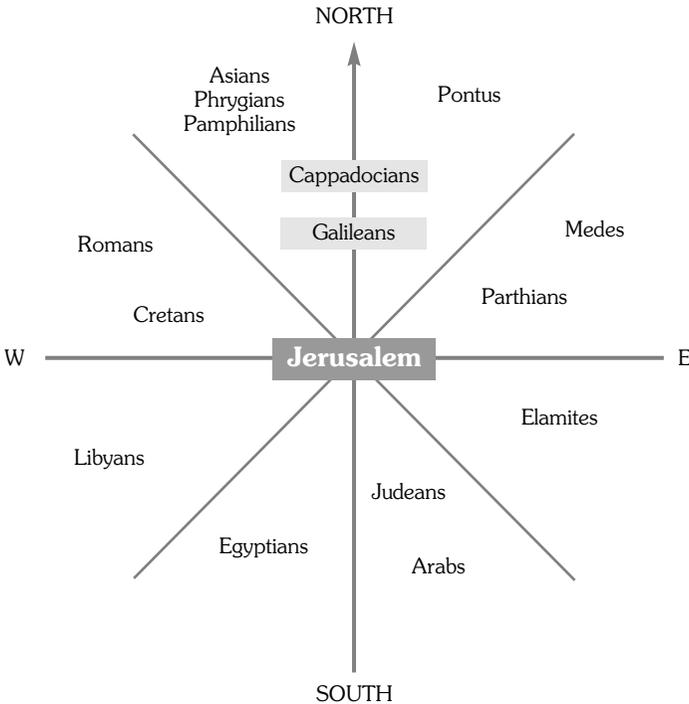


Diagram B: Languages of participants in the event at Pentecost listed in Acts 2:7-11

Even before the church is called into deliberate formation, we already have the rudiments of an embryonic international community: the Jews scattered abroad in the diaspora.⁸ After Pentecost the church moves by the power of the Spirit quickly in all directions with incredible courage and determination. This is a historical fact, not merely an artifact of the imagination of believers in salvation history. Anyone who has eyes to see can see the fecundity of the work of the Spirit among early Christian confessors. The testimony to God's saving purpose for all humanity thus abruptly entered into the Gentile world.⁹

According to Alexandrine tradition, Mark the evangelist took Peter's gospel to Africa and died in

Alexandria, having accompanied Peter and Paul from Antioch to Rome. North Africa would soon become the greatest international intellectual centre to be early addressed by the gospel. The greatest library in the ancient world was in Alexandria, the first place any world wide religious movement would want to go to gain roots and plausibility. Out of this North African ethos come the decisive patterns of exegesis reported first by John Mark and then interpreted by Clement and Origen. Shortly thereafter emerged the movement of monasticism, which started in the arena South-South West from Jerusalem in the Egyptian deserts and soon spread northeast to Palestine and Cappadocia, and later to the west. Only a few generations after Mark's gospel we will find influential witnesses such as Anthony, and Pachomius, Macarius, and the desert ascetics of Scetis, who would influence all subsequent Christian spirituality.

Wherever there were diaspora Jews, they were like a ready-made conveyance belt for the spread of Christianity. After Jerusalem Christians were found in the Jewish settlements of Samaria, Damascus, Urfa-Edessa, Nisibis, and rapidly from there all points east. From the ministries of Peter and Paul and Barnabas out of Antioch, the Christian message spread to all points north and west, but it would take some centuries for the gospel to reach the Rhine valley, where during most of the first half of the first millennium a pre-literate culture was constantly on the move. The gospel would reach

⁸ Until the coming of the Messiah, the people of Israel was racially defined as Jews, not Gentiles. They were Jews living in Gentile territories. This racial definition of the people of God would soon turn into a transracial definition of the worldwide people of faith drawn from among the Jews and Gentiles. They had news to declare to the nations. It would be preached first of all through the agency of diaspora Jews, and then through Gentiles who shared their faith in the promise of God to Abraham.

⁹ Everything begins from Jerusalem because the covenant people have been promised the land as children of Abraham by faith. The promise of God is first of all for a particular land, Canaan, Israel, Palestine. The central point within that land where the people of Israel are to meet the Lord God until the anointed One appears is Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the specific place where David reigned and Solomon built the temple, and where the second temple was again reconstructed after captivity by Herod in Roman times, only to be destroyed again in 70 AD. The cultus of Israel was centred in temple sacrifice which took place preeminently in one location, the mount of Zion in the city of David. After 70 AD Judaism went through a transformation, from Jerusalem temple worship to the diaspora, where worship was dispersed into the synagogues wherever the disperse people of Israel met.

east to the Tigris before it found its way to the Danube. Cappadocia was the major spiritual, liturgical, monastic, ecclesiastical and intellectual centre while Cologne, Mainz, Bonn, Aachen, Regensburg (Ratisbon), Vienna, and Budapest were still unformed.

To China and India

How did these Antiochene and Edessan centres of influence move east? We know they are in China by 735 AD and remained there through the 14th century. The Sigan-Fu (Sian-Fu) Stone was erected in north-west China in 781. In China there has been a Christian presence in eleven of the last fourteen centuries (only from the 14th to the 16th centuries is there no evidence of Christianity). Missionaries went along the trade routes of the silk road all the way to China. Where have you heard this argued? There were Chinese Christian communities even before Europe was a palpable literary culture. China heard the gospel even before the Swedes and Finns and Prussians and Pomeranians, and quite a long time before the Russians.

Then there is India. There is growing evidence that Christianity entered India much earlier than most westerners imagine. After a study of the textual and numismatic and archeological evidence,¹⁰ I think a

good argument can be made that the gospel reached India by the first century, and almost certainly before Nicaea. There was a representative at Nicaea from India. The first century trade routes along the sea made the Indus valley and the western shore of India relatively accessible. We now know much more about these trade routes than we did only a few decades ago. The overland trade routes also went through Afghanistan to the Indus valley and China. The sea routes went south from the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba to the Indus valley. Arguably India heard the gospel before or at least about the same time as Germany and France and Britain.

The Recovery of Classic African-Asian Exegesis

Today it is beginning to dawn upon African and Asian Christianity that *Christianity's earliest exegetical sources were not European, strictly speaking, but African and Asian* — from Origen to Ephrem, from Clement of Alexandria to Aphrahat, from Athanasius to Chrysostom. The eastern and southern sectors came long before the mature development of Europe in the period after Charlemagne and Alcuin. The European sub-quadrant was among the last of the eight to develop exegetically. It would come, but only to be built upon earlier African and Asian layers of biblical interpretation.

The African Exegetical Tradition: The classical period of theology and exegesis on the African shore of the Mediterranean preceded the classical period of theology and exegesis on the northern shore of the Mediter-

¹⁰ This is no longer just a fantastic speculation. It is gradually taking on palpability as an archaeological-numismatic and textual fact. India got its theology and exegesis largely from the Syria tradition. Syriac Christianity, having absorbed both Palestinian and Cappadocian traditions, moved down the Euphrates to Gulf and to India. This was not a major leap. The coastal sea lanes were readily accessible, as well as land routes.

ranean by at least a century. The pre-Augustinian Carthaginian exegetical tradition (of Tertullian and Cyprian and Minucius Felix and Arnobius of Sicca) would produce the earliest Latin Christian literature and the early Latin translations of the Septuagint.

The Eastern Exegetical Tradition: The same can be said of the exegetical centres of the Asian shores of the Mediterranean: With Ignatius of Antioch, with Origen and Eusebius in Caesarea, with Cyril in Jerusalem, — none in the Latin west would approach their greatness until Jerome. The exegetical centres were Alexandria, Caesarea Palestina, Antioch, and Edessa long before a comparable level of exegetical or formative intellectual development reached so far west as to Rome or Arles or Granada or Lerins.

There indeed were Goths and Franks and Huns and Celts and Slavs and Saxons and Northmen and Irish and British in the area that would later be called Europe, but where is their written literature prior to Beowulf? We have no manuscripts of Beowulf until the eighth century, and little written tradition of Norse culture until the second millennium. During the time the Antiochene and Syriac Fathers were writing highly nuanced exegesis and hymnody in the East, and while the Alexandrians were writing subtle and complicated treatises in Africa, central Europe was largely preliterate. The zenith of western Latin Christianity would not even begin until Jerome of Croatia, who would himself come east and south to Constantinople and Capadocia and Palestine for his mature

philological work. North of the Alps it remained still very rough country, prior to and after Ambrose and Augustine. Augustine of Canterbury would not be sent from Rome to England until 597. Columbanus would not transit into Gaul until after 585. Bobbio would not be a major factor in the transmission of the classic Christian tradition until the seventh century. Willibrord would not arrive in Frisia until 690. Boniface would not arrive in Geismar or Fulda until well into the eighth century. By these dates most ecumenical decisions were settled.

*What Happened Below the Line
From Carthage to Constantinople*

If you draw a straight line from Carthage to Constantinople, most early Christian exegetes were below, not above that line. Prior to Ambrose, there were only few north of that line that influenced those south, yet many from the south and east that decisively affected those north and west. The point: *African and Asian Christian exegesis preceded European Christian exegesis and was predominant in Nicene Christianity.*

Christianity after Pentecost moved in every direction to the ends of earth as then known, but only after a half millennium to Clairvaux and Cluny and Paris. Excepting the valleys of the Rhone, Danube, and Rhine, the heart of Europe would be won to the gospel only with the Carolingian Empire and following. During all these earliest classic Christian centuries when the ecumenical councils were meeting and most patterns of exegesis were well formed consensually, northern Europe was still in a

very early stage of largely preliterate cultural formation.

Of the first fourteen bishops of Rome fewer than half were Latin in origin: one was African, one Syrian, six were Greek, and then there was (arguably) Peter of Galilee. All roads did indeed lead to Rome, but from where did Rome and the Rhone valley get its exegetical and theological strength? From Palestine (Justin Martyr and probably Hippolytus), Asian Smyrna (Irenaeus), Syria (Anicetus), and Africa (Victor).

Clemens Romanus himself was a Jew living in Rome writing his letter to Corinth in Greek. It was only gradually that the monastic movement was brought into the north. John Cassian came to Lerins, and Benedict to Subiaco in Italy, but the patterns of Egyptian, Palestinian and Cappadocian monasticism were well established before they were transported to Ireland, Britain and Northern Europe. The direction of the spread of Christianity was largely from southeast to northwest.

Correlate the geography with the temporal sequence:

CENTURY	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Africa	Clement of Alexandria	Tertullian Origen Cyprian Dionysius Anthony	Pachomius Athanasius Macarius Didymus	Augustine Cyril of Alex. Quodvultdeus Palladius Ammonius
Asia (Syria, Asia Minor, Palestine, Mesopotamia)	Justin Martyr Ignatius Polycarp Theophilus	Hippolytus Gregory Thaumaturgus Methodius Aphrahat Eusebius	Cyril of Jerusalem Ephrem Basil Gregory of Nazianzus Gregory of Nyssa John Chrysostom Evagrius Theodore Nemesius	Severian Theodoret Philoxenus Cassian
Northern Coast Of Mediterranean	Clement of Rome Athenagoras	Minutius Felix Novatian Marius Victorinus	Ambrose Jerome Ambrosiaster Rufinus	Vincent Hilary of Arles Salvian
North of The Alps				

The obvious point is that few important exegetes are north of a line from Carthage to Constantinople, and there is a noticeable absence of any north of the Alps. Jerome spent his younger years in Strido and Rome, but then most of his adult life in the Byzantine east and especially in Bethlehem. The Vulgate Latin was translated in the east. Where does Jerome go for spiritual nurture? First to Cappadocia and Syria, and then to the heartland of spiritual formation in Christianity in Palestine, indeed south of Jerusalem on the edge of the Judean desert. It was not until the post-Augustinian fifth century (with Chromatius, Maximus, Paulinus, Leo, Caesarius, Benedict, Cassiodorus and Gregory I to Bede) that a strong, stable, consensual Latin tradition of exegesis flowered.

Peter's martyrdom in Rome did not make Peter a westerner or a European. He remained primarily an Aramaic speaker even in his ministry to the Greek speaking Jewish Christian community in Rome. When Paul went to Corinth and Rome, he did not divest himself of his cultural roots in Tarsus and Palestine.

The African tradition forms the earliest breathings and anticipations of proto-European exegesis. When Gregory the Great writes his book on Job, he is living in Constantinople and drinking deeply from the eastern exegetical tradition, with few Latin voices or books in his midst. When Ambrose writes his *Hexaemeron*, he has Basil's *Hexaemeron* close at hand. When Jerome flees from Rome to Byzantium and Bethlehem, he is plunging deeper into historic

Judaeo-Christian roots to learn Hebrew and practise eastern ascetic monasticism. Jerome learned his deepest spiritual formation not in Rome, but in northern Mesopotamia and Palestine. We think of Augustine as a western writer, but remember how decisive was the story of Anthony of the desert to him, and how important was Egyptian monasticism to his early writings. Augustine had first to disgorge eastern Manichean assumptions from southern Mesopotamia before he could become a Christian under the mentoring of Ambrose. The monastic experiments in Lerins and Subiaco were largely patterned after the monks of North Africa, particularly the Egyptian deserts, the valleys of Scetis. Christianity survived the persecutions and was reborn in the deserts of Scetis and Sinai and in the lauras of Judea and Cappadocia.

The great consensual writers of early Christianity were African (from Carthage to Alexandria) and Asian (from Cappadocia (Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa) from Antioch (Ignatius, John Chrysostom), from Pontus (Gregory Thaumaturgus, Evagrius) and from Asia Minor (Polycarp, Irenaeus).

III. The New European Evangelical Agenda

The Call for a New Western Gratitude For Pre-European Apostolic Faith

Evangelicals in Europe today are asking themselves just what God has done in Europe that pertains to God's purpose for all humanity.

*How can the European consciousness learn better to serve Asia and Africa in a way as decisive as Asia and Africa once served in the founding of European Christianity? What of European history and identity needs to be defended and preserved for the benefit of all humanity? How can Europe's Christian experience be made more accessible to world Christianity in a serviceable way, without presuming to be normative for all else? How can contemporary European Christianity learn to resonate once again with the whole *consensus fidelium* of all times and places?*

Insofar as European Christians are blinded to the amazing work of God before Europeanization, they have failed to understand European Christianity itself in its genius, dependency and vulnerability. Cambodian Christians today have an equal right to appeal to the pre-European sources of the witness to God's revelation as do Europeans. On this premise they may have a better chance to extract themselves from the demonic aspects of modern western colonialisms and the dying forms of western hegemony. The sun is descending upon westernization, partly due to its own idolatries and myopias.

In the attempt to reappropriate and reclaim the patient work of God that has emerged by grace during the last five centuries of western history, we of the west must be humble about where that faith came from. We are called to be realistic about how these cultural encasements of the gospel that have seemed to us so durable

may now have already run their course. We are living in the period of a decisive crisis for modern consciousness—perhaps even a terminal crisis. Modernity is not likely to regain the spiritual strength and regenerative power and moral vigour to reassert once again its former hegemony. It is now in either an equal or serving relation with the younger churches and nation building cultures. Let the west now serve gladly, as it has been served so long by the east. These observations are not intended to be read as defiantly anti-European or anti-American. Euro-American gifts like Afro-Asian gifts are culturally encased, fragile and temporally formed gifts.

It is time for east and west to join together in the nurture of an emergent vision of charismatic and evangelical faith grounded in ancient ecumenical teaching grounded. This is a challenge equally for Protestant, evangelical, orthodox, Catholic and Pentecostal communities of faith on every continent. God is calling European theology to become humbled in the divine presence about the limitations of European cultural accretions, duly penitent for its recalcitrant limitations, and open to true evangelical catholicity. Some strains of immense vitality still remain within European Christianity, especially when it makes its strength vulnerable and accessible to world Christianity.

Multicultural Orthodoxy

The apostolic tradition itself is best understood as a history of exegesis. If so, the reappropriation of scripture in ongoing cultures is itself a living holy tradition being passed from cul-

ture to culture under the supervising guidance of the Spirit.

The actual history of world Christianity reliably attests Christian truth. Its conciliar processes of scriptural reflection have clearly defined what Christians of all times and places believe. We today are called to respect and hearken to all those multicultural voices that resonate with the actual historical *communio sanctorum*.

The errors of post-Enlightenment modernity stand a better chance of being corrected by the multi-cultural perspectives of the *consensus fidelium* than by modern secular multiculturalism. Modern secular multiculturalism is not nearly as varied and diverse as multicultural Christian orthodoxy. Modern secular forms of multiculturalism remain narrowly unigenerational. Authentic Christians forms of shared memory are always not only multigenerational but multicultural and in intent omnicultural. That is a huge difference. The *communio sanctorum* remains the most profound multicultural reality in the world today, far more than in Islam, which itself is far more multicultural than modern egalitarianism. Pray with me that God the Spirit may reawaken the catholic-apostolic centre of European evangelical theology, grounded in pre-European orthodox consensuality. Pray that we might nurture in our souls those charitable forms of world-wide sensitivity that will enable the younger churches to trust their own roots in pre-European forms of general lay consent to the apostolic witness. Pray that the Spirit may reawaken

the tired secularization of Europe and America to a renewed respect for the work of the one holy universal and apostolic church the world over. Lord, show us the way of meekness concerning our language, our culture, and our skin-colour.

No Particular Culture is Privileged in the Communio Sanctorum

Advocates of ancient orthodoxy are sometimes criticized for making the assumption that there is a preference for a particular period of history, so that the texts of some special era are viewed as superior to the texts of other periods. The unintended implication is that there is an intrinsic superiority to antecedent cultures and insights, hence an archaism, romanticism, and nostalgia that hangs over the whole enterprise.

There must be no pretence within the *communio sanctorum* of making any single culture expression absolute for all other cultures. Only the truth of the gospel is eternally true, not its passing cultural shells.

We are being freed to think within the *consensus fidelium* in a way that respects consensual orthodoxy. We do not thereby view modern European categories of understanding as normative or definitive for the whole *consensus fidelium* viewed intergenerationally. Why? A transgenerational community of wisdom cannot say that modern categories are intrinsically superior to pre-modern assumptions. Nor can the faithful say in a simple way that pre-modern cultural assumptions are superior to modern or post-modern. A fifth century worshipping community cannot

be expected to have an understanding of what might follow it in the fifteenth, due to the linear nature of time.

The Holy Spirit Speaks All Languages

The apostolic tradition passed through Africa and Asia before it passed on through Europe to modern world missions. This does not imply that modern European and American contributions are negligible. European and American Christians have received extraordinary benefits from a western tradition that itself depended radically upon African and Asian exegesis in its earliest layers of formation. This is a point of gratitude, not of inferiority. Nor does this imply or provide a rationale for privileging any particular location or nation or language or century or culture. Rather we are simply recognizing that the history of revelation occurred by God's providence in a particular sequence and direction.

All the first witnesses to the gospel were Aramaic speaking, yet Aramaic was never regarded as a normative holy language for the Gentile Christians. The gospel preachers made use of Aramaic as long as Aramaic was a living language, but then passed the torch to other languages and cultures, leaving only a few Christian communities in Northern Mesopotamia today who still speak a version of the original Syriac, a version of Aramaic. As at Pentecost, we learn that the Holy Spirit speaks all languages. Christianity is different from Islam which has only one privileged holy language: the Arabic of

the Quran. The apostles used but did not absolutely privilege Aramaic, Hebrew, Latin or Greek. These languages were serviceable but were not limiting, and the gospel entered soon into Coptic, Georgian, and Armenian, but note that it took many centuries to take its modern form in French, German, Spanish, Portuguese and English.

The Directional Flow of Consensual Apostolic Exegesis

Exegesis, as we are using the term here, is the reading or interpretation of a sacred text that allows the voice of the text to speak untrammelled, as opposed to reading cultural assumptions into scripture (which is eisegesis). Consensual apostolic exegesis preceded so called scientific exegesis by eighteen-hundred years. Consensual exegesis is a coordinated form of reasoning about how apostolic texts correspond and fit together. It prays to be guided by the Spirit who leads believers into all truth. The pre- and proto-European writers of the north shore of the Mediterranean were from the outset dependent upon sources and collaborative insights that came from beyond the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean.

It is a western form of hubris to imagine that the earliest exegetical traditions of the Latin west had chronological or moral or liturgical precedence over Greek and Syriac traditions of the east. The flow of influence was largely from south to north, and from east to west. The intellectual current was flowing from Polycarp west with Irenaeus to Lyon, from Origen north to Gregory Thau-

maturgus in Armenia, from Anthony north to Cassian and Benedict, and from Augustine north to Prosper of Aquitaine. It did not flow primarily from, but rather toward, Europe. The antecedent exegetes were pre-European. The Macedonian call was answered directionally from the southeast to the northwest.

It is a misnomer and demeaning to northern Africa's great cultures and intellectual history to think of them as a mere appendage of European culture. The west appears to have unmade and remade Africa and Asia in the last 200 years. But it remains even more truth that the west is the child of Africa and Asia. This is a historical argument that contains an edge of rhetorical advocacy. The recovery of pre-European patristic exegesis will deepen the intentionality and vitality of African and Asian theology today. It will encourage the confidence of Afro-Asian Christians as they confront the mystique and pretence and supposed historical hegemony of modern western ideologies.

One Gospel of the One Lord

The gospel proclaimed by voices from Africa and Asia is not different from the gospel articulated later north of the Alps. The gospel understood by Irenaeus is substantially the same gospel as that of Paul of Tarsus or Polycarp of Smyrna. There was not diminution of the gospel in its trajectory toward Europe, but rather an accelerating momentum.

There are admittedly distinctive tonalities in Alexandrian exegesis as compared with Antiochene or Palestinian exegesis, but taken together

they tend to correct each other; by means of the ecumenical conciliar process they have engendered a plausible consensus, especially with respect to the heretical boundaries of baptismal faith. Once these boundary issues were settled (largely by the fifth century), so that the counterfeits of the apostolic witness were well-identified and forever marked, then there was a large playground or intellectual arena in which orthodoxy could practise and experiment with harmonizing the whole of scripture.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. There is no substantive difference between the baptismal faith of the church catholic in Cordova or Jerusalem or Alexandria or Milan or Cologne. But there were permissible differences in cultural expression and language and symbol systems that did not distort or disavow the central substance of the gospel message. There were no distinctive characteristics of the faith in Thessaloniki as over against Caesarea Palestina. It is the same faith spoken variously. There are not sixteen faiths, but one. This one faith requires ongoing reinterpretation in terms of emerging concrete historical challenges. It must be respoken in various languages and understood in as many symbol systems as emerge in history. Apostolic Christianity does not propose itself to be an end to cultural development, but a penetrator of all conceivable cultural developments.

It is Not Demeaning to European Christianity to Recall its Pre-European Roots

We come to this conference con-

cerned about the development of European consciousness in world perspective. We are trying to see what it is that Europe has provided for the world, how it has refracted the gospel in a way through which the whole world can benefit. This is best grasped by recognizing the pre-European exegetical consensus as a unifying influence upon all subsequent forms of exegesis.¹¹

Why should an American come to European evangelical theologians to speak of pre-European classic Christian understandings that ante-date European Christianity? My assigned task is to speak of the patristic tradition in relation to 'European Christianity in World Perspective'. Evangelical theology is today concerned with the renewal of Europe. My hope and working premise is that the renewal of European evangelical theology will be grounded in pre-European evangelical, ecumenical teaching. This is not an attempt to circumvent the European evangelical agenda, but to deepen it.

Europe's achievements after the eighth century (when European literary tradition and consciousness begins to emerge) are still best understood in relation to the exegesis of earlier pre-European Christian centuries. What happens after the eighth century in the formation of

post-Charlemagne Europe is already grounded in classic Christian exegesis, in the African, Asian and Levantine ecumenical ethos that antedated the northern Latin European tradition. This is not to diminish or ignore the great gift the Holy Spirit has engendered by making use of European consciousness and languages. It does not demean Europe to appeal to the pre-European exegetical tradition. Rather it celebrates the providential fact that European Christianity is the great flowering of the work of the Spirit in the post-patristic period. European Christianity is as profound and spectacular as Byzantine and North African Christianity. The western Spirit flowered in European culture-formation, scripture interpretation, doctrinal cohesion, and moral teaching, all of which guides most subsequent world Christianity, and indeed much world history.

The gospel was proclaimed in an ethos that was pre-European, largely African and Asian (Asian in the sense of the ancient Near East generally and particular in Asia Minor), before it became European. Therefore, the Malaysian and Zimbabwean and Brazilian cultures do not need to take as normative the European form of expression of Christianity, but can themselves appeal to a previous pre-European cultural ethos, not as an end in itself, but as an incarnate mediator of the gospel of the Incarnation. However valuable may be the work of God the Spirit through European Christianity, it is not absolutely normative for what preceded it or will follow it.

¹¹ There is a danger here of ethno-centricity that might seem to imply that whatever Europeans have decided is normative for all non-Europeans. That is an arrogant form of an argument that can better be stated quite humbly in relation to the grace of God utilizing the voices of Europeans for a decidedly trans-European purpose in world history. This does not make European thought forms normative for Malaysian Christianity.

Revelation in History

Protestant and evangelical traditions have had a high respect for ancient ecumenical consensual exegesis in their earliest formation. They do well to recover this respect in the future.

God the Spirit is working patiently in linear history. Classic reasoning argues that each layer of apostolic testimony is stretched out upon the previous layer. Earlier layers are self-evidently closer to the apostolic testimony than later ones. This does not imply that an earlier layer is superior, but simply that an earlier layer is earlier, and has chronological priority.

Did the Holy Spirit work more effectively in the first five than the last five centuries? I do not find evidence that the ancient Christian writers would assert that the Spirit's work is more effective in an earlier than a later century. When Irenaeus and Tertullian and Vincent placed a strong emphasis on antiquity as a criterion for ecumenical teaching, the antiquity referred to was the revealed and inspired ancient apostolic teaching, not simply an earlier culture or idea or thought form as such.

It is a matter of historical inquiry as to whether the Holy Spirit worked in a way that is more consensual in the first millennium than in later centuries. There is good textual evidence to conclude that the exegesis of the first millennium was far more unified and consensual than the second. That does not mean absolutely consensual, since any assertion about scripture is always subject to inquiry within the varieties of memory of the *consensus fidelium*. The rule of faith, the baptismal creeds, catech-

esis, conciliarity, and the early traditions of Christian moral reasoning show evidences of this greater proximate cohesion and agreed general consent.

Worldwide Evangelicals in Concert

The World Evangelical Alliance is a significant expression of the work of Spirit in all these cultural situations. Christians in house churches in China do not need evangelicals to approach them with a hubris that assumes that we in the west are the single conveyor of salvation by grace through faith. That is not true. Our cultures are just as tainted by and implicated in the history of sin as any. Meanwhile the Holy Spirit has not ceased to work through all our cultures, east and west, broken as we all are, to refract God's glorious mercy in the world.

The modern mission movements are largely an expression of counter-Reformation Catholicism and Protestant pietism. This has emerged out of a real history, not a blank slate. We are called to give thanks for this history, just as we must learn to give thanks for mission histories within Eastern Orthodoxy and Mar Thoma and Coptic traditions. Despite their limitations and myopias, all these mission movements have been useful instruments of God the Spirit to bring persons the gospel.

This gospel is at this moment being proclaimed in dusty villages and on the airwaves and by people on bicycles in India and Vietnam and Luzon, and in microeconomic service projects in central Africa, and relief work

in Afghanistan. The truth of Christianity is now becoming newly embodied in distant places like Mongolia, Myanmar (Burma), Nigeria and Peru. All of these emerging communities have a full right to access to receive durable blessings from the pre-European fathers in the faith.

We need not be ashamed of evan-

gelical history, nor inordinately proud of it. We are humbled by the way God the Spirit has utilized European Christianity for world Christianity. *We in the west are called to become humbly aware of how God has prepared the way in the east for the work of the west, and how now the west must learn once again from the east and south.*

NEW FROM PATERNOSTER

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Andrew Walker is Canon Professor of Theology, Culture and Education at King's College, London. **Kristin Aune** is completing her PhD thesis on gender in contemporary British evangelicalism at King's College, London.

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Christian Unity *vis-à-vis* Roman Catholicism: A Critique of the Evangelicals and Catholics Together dialogue

Leonardo De Chirico

Keywords: Ecumenism, Second Vatican Council, culture, justification, biblical authority, salvation, sacraments

In the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the Berlin Congress on mission (1966), a new season in ecumenical relationships was inaugurated between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics on a world-wide scale. Two main initiatives should be remembered: the Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission (ERCDOM),¹ which began after the publication of the encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and the Lausanne Congress for

World Evangelization (1974), and the on-going discussions between the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) and the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity² which were prompted by the 1986 WEF document *Roman Catholicism. A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective*.³ Apart from these international meetings, more locally-based encounters are mushrooming everywhere. Following centuries of con-

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¹ B. Meeking, J. Stott (eds.), *The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission 1977-1984* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986).

² The proceedings of the meetings can be found in *ERT* 21:2 (1997) and 23:1 (1999).

³ *ERT* 10:4 (1986) and 11:1 (1987). For a brief presentation of other dialogues, cfr. N. Blough, 'Catholiques et évangéliques en dialogue. Perspective historique et actuelle' in L. Schweitzer (ed.), *Le dialogue catholiques-évangéliques. Débats et documents* (Cléon d'Andran: Ed. Excelsis; Vaux-sur-Seine: Edifac, 2002) pp. 19-40.

troversy, Evangelicals and Catholics are learning the art of dialogue based on mutual respect.

The new attitude to dialogue would seem to suit most Evangelicals though the most frequently heard voices come from the two opposite extremes of this broad consensus. While some are willing to go beyond mere dialogue to explore closer forms of unity with Catholics, others are reluctant to accept any form of dialogue because they deem that, in ecumenical jargon, dialogue is never mere dialogue but is based on the premise of a unity which already exists though it may be somewhat imperfect. The issue of Christian unity is at the centre of the debate while dialogue goes on at different levels.

On the whole, the situation is extremely fluid and is an example of the wide variety of positions within Evangelicalism which can be seen in other areas as well⁴. For Evangelicals, the issue of Roman Catholicism is closely linked to the issue of evangelical unity. The two issues are interwoven because the way they face the former calls into question the way they consider and experience the latter. The evaluation of the dialoguing process which started in the USA in the early 1990s is an interesting case-study in the present scenario and provides the opportunity for an evangelical reflection on Roman Catholicism and its bearings on the topic of Christian unity.

⁴ Cfr. my article, 'Evangelicals and the Roman Catholic Church since Vatican II', *European Journal of Theology* X (2001/1), pp. 25-32.

1. Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT)

The 1994 document, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission*⁵, does not seem to be directly related to the above mentioned dialogues nor does it appear to be in any way connected to the institutions which had been involved up to that point.⁶ The architects of the whole project make it clear that its immediate background is to be sought in the American socio-political scene of the 1980s.

From their critical perspective, that decade witnessed a dramatic deepening of the chasm between opposing cultural forces in the American 'public square'.⁷ To put it simply, the fighting forces confronting each other were, on the one hand, those sections of society who wished to defend a Christian-based moral vision and social policy, and, on the other, the emerging, rampant segments who wanted to abandon the traditionally American ethos or radically rethink it in terms of postmodern, relativistic trends of thought. The range of battle fields was extremely diverse and included

⁵ Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission* (ECT) (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996)

⁶ Colson and Neuhaus explicitly say that the talks leading to ECT were 'independent of the official conversations between the Roman Catholic and various evangelical Protestants bodies'; C. Colson, R. Neuhaus (eds.), ECT, p. xiii.

⁷ This kind of approach can be found, for instance, in R. Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984); C. Colson, *Kingdoms in Conflict* (Dallas: Word, 1987); K. Fournier, *A House United? Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994).

thorny issues like abortion, pornography, homosexuality, euthanasia, the nature and integrity of the family, education value-systems and basic social patterns. In the midst of this dramatic confrontation in American society, and perhaps because of it and through it, some Evangelicals and Catholics found themselves fighting on the same side.⁸ Their encounter began to take shape at grass roots level in the 1970s, especially in the pro-life movement, after centuries of mutual harsh polemics,⁹ but the new element in the situation was that confessionally divided Christians were sharing religiously grounded moral convictions and wanted to engage more vigorously in the challenge of saving America from the disastrous results of relativism. The relationship between Evangelicals and Catholics which is contemplated in ECT is what Timothy George has called 'an ecumenism of the trenches'¹⁰ emerging from a common moral struggle against secular trends in American society and encouraging proclamation and implementation of Christian values at all levels.

Christian Unity According to ECT
ECT is of theological interest in that this kind of coalition is said to have a theological basis. ECT drafters and supporters appeal not only to a relatively similar evaluation of current social trends and to the shared core values advocated by some politically conservative Evangelicals and Catholics. They have no difficulty in claiming that the possibility, indeed the necessity, of co-operation between conservative Christians in the 'public square' is primarily warranted by their theological common roots in spite of past and present confessional divisions. Sharing a political and moral agenda for society is a fruit of a 'theologically rooted alliance'.¹¹

The connection between socio-political motives and theological justification for common action is also clearly visible in the order of the statement; the section 'We Contend Together', which is focused on 'culture war' concerns, is preceded by the section 'We Affirm Together' in which a basic confession of faith is outlined, and then followed by the programmatic paragraph entitled 'We Witness Together' where a qualified commitment to Christian mission is envisaged. In other words, according to ECT, contending in society is based on affirming gospel truth and is aimed at witnessing to the world. This basic theological core is the real centre around which ECT revolves, most particularly as far as its Evangelical signatories are concerned.

⁸ The different stages of the history of ECT are summarized in C. Colson, R. Neuhaus (eds.), ECT, pp. x-xiii.

⁹ Cf. M. Noll, 'The History of the Encounter: Roman Catholics and Protestant Evangelicals' in C. Colson, R. Neuhaus (eds.), ECT, pp. 81-114. Cf. also R. Nash, 'Evangelical and Catholic Cooperation in the Public Arena' in J. Armstrong (ed.), *Roman Catholicism. Evangelical Protestants Analyze what Divides and Unites us* (Chicago: Moody, 1994) pp. 181-197.

¹⁰ T. George, 'Catholics and Evangelicals in the Trenches', *Christianity Today* (May 16, 1994) pp. 16-17.

¹¹ Colson, 'The Common Cultural Task' in C. Colson, R. Neuhaus (eds.), ECT, p. 3.

From a post-Vatican II Catholic perspective, in fact, there is nothing exceptional in acknowledging together with other Christians, as ECT does, the existence of 'common convictions about Christian faith and mission' which warrant the possibility for the dialoguing partners to consider each other as 'brothers and sisters in Christ'. For Evangelicals, however, this ecumenical readiness has not been a feature of their history and practice, especially in relation to Catholics. If it is borne in mind that until the 1960s, Protestant anti-Romanism was a very influential staple in American Evangelicalism, the committed language of togetherness, oneness, unity, co-operation which permeates ECT is much more telling than its ordinary usage in widespread ecumenical jargon. Evidently, in the case of ECT, the pervasive 'We-Together' pattern is much more ecumenically significant than in other bilateral documents where it is often employed.¹²

The doctrinal basis for this evangelically discovered or catholically reaffirmed unity in the gospel is the Apostles' Creed which both parties wholeheartedly indicate as being 'an accurate statement of scriptural truth'. The appreciation of this basic, albeit foundational, agreement does not eschew the frank assertion of 'authentic disagreements', 'deep and long-standing differences', 'communal and ecclesial separations' which

are barriers to full communion even between otherwise like-minded Evangelicals and Catholics. ECT drafters also provide a non-exhaustive but substantial list of problematic areas which includes fundamental issues regarding the nature of the church and ministry, the authority of Scripture, the sacraments and devotion to Mary and the saints. According to ECT, these matters are not to be avoided or downplayed but fully debated and thoroughly researched, even though the contingent socio-cultural motivations and preoccupations which were predominant in ECT's background tend to allow the whole dialoguing process to be shaped by a sort of theological pragmatism and not by a willingness to come to grips with the basic issues which divide Evangelicals and Catholics. The section 'We Search Together' is a further commitment on the part of the signatories to work and study side by side.

The aim of such an informal, 'disciplined and sustained conversation' is intended to be positive and constructive, that is 'to strengthen between us a relationship of trust in obedience of truth'.¹³ The non-confrontational line espoused by ECT is also visible in the expressed goal of nonproselytization between professing Christians and in the encouragement which the statement gives to focusing attention on the task of reaching those who are outside the broad community of faith instead of trying to convert who are already believers.

¹² Sproul reports that, according to Richard Neuhaus, this affirmation is 'at the core of the entire document', R.C. Sproul, *By Faith Alone. The Doctrine that Divides* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996) p. 15.

¹³ C. Colson, R. Neuhaus (eds.), ECT, p. xxi.

The Spectrum of Evangelical Reactions to ECT

ECT's evangelical signatories are ranged across the wide spectrum of present-day American Evangelicalism, though they participated in it strictly as individuals acting from and to their denominational or para-church constituencies but not on behalf of them. While on the Catholic side, 'relatively little commotion has resulted from the conciliatory statement',¹⁴ the American Evangelical world does not seem to have received it with the enthusiasm its promoters hoped for. Although sundry ecumenically-minded Evangelicals have accepted ECT quite positively, the release of the statement has produced much bewilderment and disarray especially in Reformed Evangelical circles.¹⁵

The debate following it has exposed the serious rift within Evangelicalism on fundamental theological orientations and concerns, and not just over the issue of how to relate to Catholicism.¹⁶ In J.I. Packer's vivid words, ECT has inevitably

come 'under evangelical fire'¹⁷ with 'bleak, skewed, fearful, and fear-driven things'¹⁸ being said about it. In spite of all their diversity, such negative critical judgements share some basic common strands which can be highlighted, varying from the claim that ECT jeopardizes the gospel to the charge that it betrays the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith;¹⁹ it blurs the meaning of the word 'Christian';²⁰ it confuses Christian mission with a social agenda; it undermines evangelism in Catholic countries, and so forth.

The scope and tone of the criticism has been so drastic and clear-cut because for many Evangelicals 'no less than Christian theological integrity is thought to be at stake'.²¹ Apart from strong opposition from individual theologians, journals and church leaders, even a highly representative evangelical institution, the World Evangelical Fellowship (now Alliance), which is itself carrying on an official dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, thought it appro-

¹⁴ D. Charles, 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together: one year later', *ProEcclesia* V (1996/1) p. 73.

¹⁵ Cfr., for instance, J. MacArthur, *Reckless Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994); J. Ankerberg, J. Weldon, *Protestants and Catholics. Do they now agree?* (Eugene: Harvest, 1995); R. Zins, *Romanism* (Huntsville: White Horse Publ., 1995); J. McCarthy, *Conversations with Catholics* (Eugene, Harvest, 1997).

¹⁶ For a survey of Evangelical reactions, cfr. N. Geisler, R. MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995) pp. 491-502 and D. Charles, 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together: one year later'.

¹⁷ J. Packer, 'Crosscurrents among Evangelicals' in C. Colson, R. Neuhaus (eds.), *ECT*, p. 149. In this paper, Packer assesses and responds to the evangelical criticism of ECT. On Packer's involvement in the ECT process, cf. A. McGrath, *To Know and to Serve God. A Biography of J.I. Packer* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997) pp. 264-275.

¹⁸ J. Packer, 'Why I signed it', *Christianity Today* (Dec 12, 1994) p. 34.

¹⁹ R.C. Sproul, *By Faith Alone*, pp. 10-30 and 152-155; P. Eveson, *The Great Exchange. Justification by Faith Alone in the Light of Recent Thought* (Bromley: Day One Publ., 1996) pp. 89-96.

²⁰ I. Murray, 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together: A movement of watershed significance?', *The Banner of Truth*, 393 (1996) p. 12.

²¹ D. Charles, 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together: one year later', p. 74.

priate to issue a 'commentary on ECT' expressing perplexities on the document and distancing itself from the initiative as a whole.²² More specifically, WEF refuses to link a commendable 'ecumenism of the trenches' as far as culture war is concerned to the possibility for Evangelicals and Catholics to do evangelism and mission together when 'the doctrinal differences ... remain unresolved'. Furthermore, WEF underlines the semantic problem together with the interpretative issue involved in joint statements such as ECT whereby 'the use of common language does not mean that the meanings are the same'. In other words, the mere act of subscribing a declaration is no indication of a genuinely recovered unity if each party attributes substantially different nuances to the agreed text.

Another significant response to ECT has come from an authoritative evangelical parachurch agency, the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals (ACE). In reacting to ECT not only in negative terms but with the desire to suggest basic guidelines for subsequent Evangelical-Catholic discussion, ACE issued seven 'Resolutions for Roman Catholic and Evangelical Dialogue'.²³ While questioning ECT's purported creedal unity, the 'Resolutions' affirm that 'this

catholic consensus' over the ecumenical creeds is not perceived 'as a sufficient basis for declaring that agreement exists on all the essential elements of the gospel' (1). According to ACE, this kind of confessional unity could be found only when the other essential tenet of the Gospel is included, that is 'justification by faith alone' without which the 'adequacy of any version of the Gospel' is deemed as falling short. As for this pivotal doctrine, 'radical disagreement continues' between Evangelicals and Catholics (2). Creedal consensus as advocated by ECT, however, warrants 'the making of common cause on moral and cultural issues in society' though this cooperation should not be regarded as a 'common ecclesial action in fulfilling a common ecclesial mission' (4). While rejoicing in the awareness that 'the Roman Catholic Church contains many ... believers', ACE states that as an ecclesial institution, it is not 'an acceptable Christian communion, let alone being the mother of all the faithful' (6).

On the whole, then, ECT has stimulated much discussion and has provided an occasion for Evangelicals to reflect afresh on the issue of Roman Catholicism and on the wider stance of Evangelicalism in the present-day ecumenical scene.

2. The Gift of Salvation (GOS)

In the intention of the drafters, the ECT document was conceived as an initial step in the deepening of a mutual commitment to dialogue between its Evangelical and Catholic contributors. The negative appraisal

²² J. Vencer, 'Commentary on ECT' in H. Fuller, *People of the Mandate. The story of WEF* (Carlisle: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) pp. 191-193. The next two quotations are taken from the same article.

²³ *Modern Reformation* (July 1994) 28-29. It is perhaps worth noticing that Jim Packer signed both ECT and these Resolutions.

of some Evangelicals on the main tenets of the statement apparently strengthened the conviction that there was a need for further conversations, especially on the weaker, problematic areas which had come under strong criticism. The first result of this continuing and more sharply focused debate was a shorter document released in November 1997 under the title of *The Gift of Salvation*.²⁴ Sponsored and led by the same authors as ECT, namely Charles Colson and Richard Neuhaus, GOS stems from the continuation of the process initiated by ECT and can be thought of as being an elucidation of the controversial section 'We Affirm Together' of the previous document. The filial connection with ECT is also evoked when GOS is sometimes called ECT II.

Unity and Justification by Faith in GOS

As has already been suggested above, what the supporters of ECT considered to be the real gain of the whole ecumenical process which led to this document was considered by some Evangelical critics to be its fatal flaw. Expressing a trenchant comment often repeated in evangelical reactions to ECT, Sproul asks whether Evangelicals have the right to root an alleged confessional unity apart from, besides or beyond an unambiguous agreement on the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Granting the decisive importance of *sola fide* in historic Protestantism

and noting the noisy silence in ECT over it, Sproul defines it as 'the missing doctrine' of the statement.²⁵ In his view, its omission either means that ECT does not perceive justification by faith to be an essential aspect of the Christian faith or that the long controversy over it between Evangelicals and Catholics has now been resolved. It is clear that both assumptions are not feasible and this omission can be explained only in terms of ecumenical diplomacy. The train of Sproul's argument goes as far as to say that this kind of apparent neutrality or wilful bypassing fudges the whole effort and empties the statement of any ecumenical credibility.

At this point, Sproul voices a conservative evangelical quasi-consensus in holding that without coming to terms with *sola fide*, that is without a full acceptance of the Protestant doctrine of imputed righteousness on the Catholic side, even speaking of 'unity' is a sheer impossibility, given the corner-stone role of justification in Protestant Evangelicalism especially in relation to or against the catholic understanding of it which was framed at Trent. In light of this opinion shared by many Evangelical critics of ECT, Christian unity cannot be attained at the expense of the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone because without this doctrine there is no evangelically interpreted Christian gospel. Taking these reservations seriously into account, ECT drafters eventually decided to engage in the debate precisely over the crucial issue of *sola*

²⁴ The GOS text was originally published in *Christianity Today* (Dec 8, 1997) p. 34.

²⁵ R.C. Sproul, *By Faith Alone*, pp. 22-24.

fide. In this way, they wished to demonstrate that the kind of ecumenism favoured by the participants is an 'ecumenism of conviction', not one of 'accommodation'²⁶ as was charged against the vagueness of ECT on various matters.

Given this background, justification by faith comes to the fore as the obvious doctrine on which dialogue must concentrate if it is to go beyond socio-political concerns. The outcome of such an ecumenical endeavour is that, while restating with ECT the confession of a 'common faith in Christ' and the acknowledgement of 'one another as brothers and sisters in Christ', GOS strives to deepen the theological quality of the professed unity after addressing the core soteriological issue of the Reformation. If ECT confessed unity on the basis of the Apostles' Creed, GOS claims that it is also possible to envisage 'a common understanding of salvation', including an agreed version of *sola fide*. With this development, the ECT process has gained a theological merit, in its supporters' opinion, in that the unity expressed in GOS is 'not indeed unity in every aspect of the gospel, but unity in its basic dimension'²⁷ which bridges the confessions of faith of the undivided church and that of contemporary American conservative Christianity without ignoring the doctrinal specificity of the historic protestant tradition.

Rather boldly and with a hint of triumphalism, after outlining the content of the accord over salvation, GOS states that what has been affirmed 'is in agreement with what the Reformation traditions have meant by justification by faith alone (*sola fide*)'. In view of such a statement, it should not be a surprise to read that, according to the signatories, 'for the first time in 450 years, Evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics have publicly agreed to a common understanding of salvation'.²⁸ Without making any reference to the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue nor to any other relevant ecumenical document on the same doctrine, these claims sound rather curious because they give the impression of a major breakthrough of historical importance achieved through an informal, unofficial and relatively short dialogue culminating in the release of a concise text.

Reflecting on the ecumenical ethos of the whole initiative, it can be argued that the sort of pragmatic ecumenism resulting in ECT seems to have also operated in GOS with a certain measure of consistency. Apparently, the vaguely Protestant outlook of the statement is moderated by the eloquent underestimation of the concept of imputation. The newly discovered possibility of confessing together 'fundamental truths about the gift of salvation' goes hand in hand with the awareness of 'some serious and persistent differences' between the Evangelical signatories

²⁶ These expressions are employed by T. George, T. Oden, J. Packer, 'An Open Letter about The Gift of Salvation', *Christianity Today* (April 27, 1998) p. 9.

²⁷ George, Oden, Packer, 'Open Letter', p. 9.

²⁸ As reported by R. Frame, *Christianity Today* (Jan 12, 1998) p. 61.

and the Catholic ones on specific details or broad frameworks related to the doctrine itself which require 'further and urgent exploration'. Among these 'necessarily interrelated questions' there are 'the meaning of baptismal regeneration, the Eucharist and sacramental grace, the historic uses of the language of justification as it relates to imputed and transformative righteousness' and 'the normative status of justification in relation to all Christian doctrine'.

On the whole, then, while testifying to a further advancement along the path of an 'ecumenism of conviction' than ECT was able to express, GOS is also in itself an interlocutory step. Its theological import is partially invalidated by its rather naïve approach to the controversy over *sola fide* which is a highly complex matter. In Sproul's telling words, 'the ECT initiative is seriously, if not fatally, flawed since it proclaims too much way too soon'.²⁹ Another point underlined by some GOS evangelical signatories is that the professed unity testified to in the statement is a bond between 'some Roman Catholics and some evangelicals', not implying at all 'a unity of faith with the church of Rome'.³⁰

²⁹ R.C. Sproul, 'What ECTII Ignores. The inseparable link between imputation and the gospel', *Modern Reformation* (Sept/Oct 1998). In the same respect, Neuhaus writes that 'the Lutheran formula of *simul iustus et peccator*, which was Rome's chief objection to JD (Lutheran-Catholic Joint Declaration), is no part of 'The Gift of Salvation', *First Things* 86 (Oct 1998) p. 82. Neuhaus too recognises that the central issue of the Protestant-Catholic divergence on the doctrine was untouched by GOS.

³⁰ T. George, T. Oden, J. Packer, 'Open Letter'—italics in the original.

The level of brotherly recognition concerns individual believers involved in the process while no recognition of that kind is extended to Catholicism as an ecclesial institution. As Gerald Bray puts it, 'one of the most painful parts of the ECT dialogue has been the need for Evangelicals to explain to the Catholics involved that we cannot regard the Roman Church in the way that a Baptist might look at Presbyterians. There is a qualitative difference between us.'³¹

Evangelical Criticism of GOS

As it might be expected, in spite of the good wishes of the promoters, GOS is facing nonetheless the negative responses of the same strands of the Evangelical movement which reacted negatively to ECT. The tone of many appraisals sounds very similar to previous verdicts, including the charge of selling out the Reformation and of being a 'disappointing sequel' to ECT.³² As for the merits of the document, the main reservation advanced by the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals (ACE) is that GOS fails 'adequately to express the essential Protestant understanding of the gospel' in that it does not grapple with the concept of imputation.³³ What GOS does is to indulge in 'ambiguous expressions' which are perfectly compatible within a Roman Catholic perspective. The blatant

³¹ G. Bray, 'Editorial', *Churchman* 113 (1999) p. 197.

³² Zins, *Romanism*, p. 255.

³³ 'An Appeal to Fellow Evangelicals. The Alliance Response to the second ECT document *The Gift of Salvation*' (1998).

paradox seen by ACE is that 'while ECT expressed concern over the relativization of truth in our day it has led in GOS to a relativizing of the most important truth of all, namely, the Gospel itself'.

The problem of ambiguity is also evoked by Sproul, for whom GOS was drawn up with a 'studied ambiguity by which agreement is reached in words but not in substance, leaving each side the opportunity to maintain its original position'.³⁴ Moreover, given the admission found in GOS of a 'serious and persistent' difference on the language of imputation (which is inseparably linked to the concept of imputation), what is presented as an agreement on justification by faith as the protestant traditions understood it is not *sola fide* but, at best, a limited version of it, if not a deformation of it. In this train of evaluation, GOS only affirms 'ingredients' of *sola fide*, not *sola fide* itself. Of course, this criticism is mainly addressed at Evangelical participants who have presented the common declaration in a much more positive way. As for Catholic signatories, their unwillingness to embrace *sola fide* wholeheartedly is thought of as being perfectly legitimate from their point of view.

The question of how to approach Roman Catholicism is another area which has not seen any significant development. GOS, like ECT, appears to espouse an isolated, atomistic, fragmented way of conducting the conversation which

seems to overlook the fact that doctrines are parts of a coherent system and that the difference between Evangelical and Catholic views of justification lies in the central core of their respective understandings of the reality of God's saving work. In Sproul's words, 'the differences are systemic, not partial; they are radical, not slight'.³⁵ Applying these critical remarks to GOS, it can be said that 'from an evangelical point of view, it is practically meaningless to uphold together with Catholics the doctrine of justification by faith, on the one hand, and express a sharp disagreement on 'baptismal regeneration', 'the Eucharist', 'sacramental grace', 'diverse understandings of merit, reward, purgatory, and indulgences', 'Marian devotion and the assistance of the saints', etc., on the other. Unlike the Catholic one, the evangelical framework cannot tolerate such diversity and calls for a choice.'³⁶

In other words, an appreciation of the sharp edges of the evangelical doctrinal system should go together with an awareness of the open-ended and rounded shape of the Catholic one. The latter can subsume the former, provided that it renounces its sharpness, while the former cannot blunt itself to be a part of the latter, lest it lose its distinct adherence to the exclusiveness of the gospel. The acknowledgement

³⁵ R.C. Sproul, *Getting the Gospel Right. The Tie that Binds Evangelicals Together* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999) p. 86.

³⁶ 'The Gift of Salvation. A Reflection by IFED', unpublished paper (1999).

³⁴ R.C. Sproul, 'What ECTII Ignores'

of this basic contrast between the respective doctrinal systems should inform all theological discussions with Roman Catholics. GOS lacks a theologically 'integrated approach' in dealing with the doctrine of justification by faith because it severs it from the whole of the biblical message and does not show a satisfactory degree of acquaintance with the Catholic synthesis which is unpalatable for Evangelicals.

If this is the case, GOS achieves far less than is claimed by its proponents. Furthermore, because of its basic methodological and theological weakness, as a model for ecumenical dialogue with Catholics it is bound to be ambiguous and, in the end, unfruitful. The kind of dialogue Evangelicals should aspire to needs to be more historically conscious, theologically careful and ecumenically alert than their contributions to both ECT or GOS have been.

3. The Gospel of Jesus Christ (GJC)

The process which has led from ECT to GOS has shown that while confronting Roman Catholicism, Evangelicals reflect and act upon their own identity. The question of how to deal with Roman Catholics can be answered only after one has tackled what it means to be an Evangelical. Differences in the area of ecumenism generally reflect divergences in understanding of what is constitutive for the evangelical faith. It should not be surprising therefore that after having ventured into conversations with Catholics and received some negative reactions from within the

movement, the Evangelical promoters and their critics have come back to the issue of evangelical doctrinal identity, and inevitably so. This pause in evangelical reflection on the ecumenical process has given birth to 'The Gospel of Jesus Christ. An Evangelical Celebration'³⁷ which is a basic statement on the evangel, nurtured by strong evangelical convictions and aimed at a broad evangelical consensus, beyond past and present contrasts on ecumenical initiatives.

The Evangel as the Basis of Unity

GJC is meant to be a 'celebration' of the gospel, a brief dogmatic outline of the content of the biblical message expressed in a rather doxological vein. Apart from this general thrust, the main emphasis of the document revolves around the doctrine of justification by faith, its place within the evangelical confession of the gospel and its theological articulation vis-à-vis recent disputes within Evangelicalism itself. If GOS pointed the way to a possible convergence between Evangelicals and Catholics on justification which was criticised by some Evangelicals, GJC spells out the basic and shared evangelical understanding of the same doctrine.

The paramount desire is to stress the forensic view of justification and this is achieved by the insertion in the text of a list of synonymous verbs or nouns when the meaning of justification is sketched out. So, it is said that

³⁷ The GJC text was published on *Christianity Today* (Jun 14, 1999) pp. 51-56. R.C. Sproul provides an useful, article by article, commentary in *Getting the Gospel Right*.

'God 'justifies the wicked' (ungodly: Rom 4:5) by imputing (reckoning, crediting, counting, accounting) righteousness to them'. Later GJC speaks of 'the doctrine of the imputation (reckoning or counting) both of our sins to Christ and of his righteousness to us' (12) and of Christ's righteousness which is 'counted, reckoned, or imputed to us by the forensic (that is, legal) declaration of God' (13). The entire semantic power of the forensic language of justification is employed to focus on the declarative dimension of the act of justification. Another related concern is the willingness to underline what happens in justification in terms of a 'decisive transition, here and now' and 'transaction'.

Of course, though unmentioned, the distinct protestant perspective on justification with its anti-Roman Catholic overtone is clearly in the background of such statements. Other aspects of the evangel are not as emphasised as justification by faith alone³⁸ but, in light of the history and purposes of GJC, the insistence on 'sola fide' should not be taken as an underestimation of necessarily related truths concerning God's saving work. Since every text has its context, GJC has its own in the debate over justification which ECT and GOS gave rise to. In the light of internal disputes over ecumenical issues,

the message of GJC seems to be: back to square one, back to the evangel.

The Affirmation/Denial Pattern

After the introductory preamble, two paragraphs on 'the Gospel' and 'Unity in the Gospel' and before the final section on 'Our Commitment', the rest of GJC is constructed using a composite pattern whereby affirmations concerning various constitutive elements of the evangel are followed by denials of possible misunderstandings or incompatible statements with the previously asserted truths. The rationale behind such a procedure seems to imply that the act of affirming something is only one side of the task related to the spelling out of the evangelical doctrinal identity. The other unavoidable aspect has to do with denying what is perceived as being contrary to what is positively affirmed. The gospel can be witnessed to propositionally by way of positive assertions and negative derivations. In contemporary history of confessional declarations, this pattern has noble precedents in the Barmen Declaration (1934) and the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978).

The model reflects the evangelical logic of theologizing, in which affirming something implies negating what is not in line with what has been affirmed. What is even more important is that the wise combination of 'yes' and 'no' is particularly vital for Evangelicals as they confront the ecumenical movement in general and Roman Catholicism in particular.

This procedure is very far from the

³⁸ In a brief letter Cornelius Plantinga, John Stackhouse and Nicholas Wolterstorff, amongst others, have expressed reservations on the fact that GJC seems to refer to justification at the expense of sanctification, thus failing to represent a real evangelical consensus; cfr. *Christianity Today* (Oct 4, 1999) p. 15.

ecumenical (or catholic!) pattern in which two or more parties can uphold something together but are not constrained to work through the implications of what they have affirmed in an evangelically coherent way. Moreover, as will be indicated later, the Catholic epistemological framework is characterised by a comprehensive et-et (both-and) pattern which enables it to hold together things which are different. The introduction of the 'denial' element in GJC contrasts with this Catholic sensitivity towards the catholicity of doctrine. A Catholic theologian would perhaps subscribe to the 'affirmation' sections of GJC but would feel extremely uncomfortable, if not totally uneasy, with the 'denial' parts, especially nn. 1, 12, 13, 14 on issues like the authority of the church, justification as infusion of righteousness, the role of works and human cooperation with grace.

Unlike ECT and GOS, GJC goes in the right direction in stressing the essential link between the 'yes' and the 'no' of the gospel evangelically interpreted. The misunderstanding caused by the previous documents should teach an important lesson in this respect—that is, the need for Evangelicals to relearn to say their evangelical 'no' (together with the 'yes', of course!) in ecumenical encounters when the truth of the gospel is under scrutiny. 'No' is part of their theological identity just as much as 'yes' and makes it possible to avoid dangerous ambiguities.

4. Your Word is Truth (YWT)

The hope that the content, the pat-

tern and the ethos of GJC was to become an useful reference point for future evangelical endeavours in the ecumenical scene has been frustrated by the most recent release of the ECT process: the document *Your Word is Truth* issued in 2002.³⁹ While YWT drafters thank God for 'the years of prayer, study, and conversation' and recall 'the many blessings resulting from this cooperative effort', they do not mention the controversy and conflict that the same process has caused within Evangelicalism. There is no hint of the theological debate, at times unhelpfully dismissive but often constructive and worth engaging, that has taken place in Evangelical circles.

This unilateral evaluation evokes a question: are theologically critical assessments of the ECT process being taken into consideration or is the ecumenical agenda of ECT so pervasive that it is pursued at any cost? As has been pointed out earlier, the whole ECT process has produced a widespread controversy which culminated in the drafting of GJC (1999) in which more evangelically defined criteria were stated as far as the core of the gospel is concerned against the background of the ECT process. It seems that the ECT dialogue has not started from GJC's refreshing lessons, but is more interested in pursuing the dialogue according to the ecumenically controversial ECT categories. The by-

³⁹ The document itself and some essays reflecting on its contents are found in C. Colson and R.J. Neuhaus (eds.), *Your Word is Truth. A Project of Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (Grand Rapids-Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002).

passing of GJC can be thought of as a weakness of YWT while it is hoped that future engagements of ECT will take it into a proper account.

Systemic Awareness and Christian Unity

With YWT the ECT dialogue has addressed the classical *locus* of Scripture and tradition while further conversations on *communio sanctorum* are anticipated. It is impossible to downplay the importance of focusing on specific theological topics in order to encourage the conversation. Indeed, this procedure is inevitable. What is at stake here is the theological approach which should nurture an evangelical analysis of Roman Catholicism and dialogue with Roman Catholics. Any attempt to address Roman Catholicism should be informed by an awareness of its being a theological system characterised by distinctive features which differ significantly from the evangelical faith.⁴⁰ There are distinct points where YWT is wanting in its lack of systemic awareness.

Firstly, in briefly reviewing the ECT process, YWT states that there has been 'a common affirmation of the most central truths of Christian faith, including justification by faith', referring explicitly to GOS. Later in the text, the Roman Catholic signatories restate their view that the church is

the body of Christ 'through which his justifying and sanctifying grace is mediated'. From an evangelical perspective, this statement clearly contradicts what has been written earlier about the 'common affirmation' of the 'most central truth' of justification by faith alone. How can there be a 'common affirmation' of justification by faith when the Roman Catholic view of ecclesial mediatorship of justifying grace is represented again in so sharp terms? Is it still justification by faith alone if it is mediated by the church in Roman Catholic terms? Again, the problem lies in the ambiguity of GOS which is sustainable, indeed indispensable in a Roman Catholic framework, but not compatible with an affirmation of the Evangelical doctrine of justification by faith. That ambiguity remains unresolved in YWT since it restates *both* the common affirmation of justification by faith alone *and* the mediatorship of the Roman Catholic Church. Of course, Catholics hold both, but Evangelicals cannot if they want to remain true to the most central biblical truth of justification by faith alone.

Secondly, the fact that the Catholic signatories affirm the 'final authority' of the written Word for faith and life does not mean, in a Roman Catholic perspective, the setting aside of the teaching of Vatican II (namely, *Dei Verbum* II,9-10) which enlarges the scope of Catholic theology so as to include sacred tradition and the teaching of the Church as inextricably joined to Scripture (and thus possessing equal finality with it). Since Scripture is always related to eccle-

⁴⁰ A systemic analysis is suggested in the document 'An Evangelical Approach Towards Understanding Roman Catholicism' issued by IFED and endorsed by the Italian Evangelical Alliance in 1999: cf. *European Journal of Theology* X (2001/1), pp. 32-35.

sial tradition and magisterial teaching, her alleged finality is not understood as if it were above all other *loci* of authority. It is clear that Vatican II urges the faithful to receive Scripture and tradition as equals, '*pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia*'.

So, the impression is given that a substantial agreement on the finality of Scripture is reached while the reality is that the real theological difference remains unresolved. The authority of Scripture is either 'final' or it is not so. In Evangelical terms, the finality of Scripture requires the submission to it of any ecclesial tradition and of any teaching authority of the church. If the church says 'yes' to the final authority of Scripture, she says 'no' to any attempt to shift the *locus* of authority from the Word of God to herself via tradition. Again, Roman Catholic theology can reconcile the affirmation of both, whereas Evangelical theology cannot. Evangelicals can affirm something and, while affirming it, deny its contrary, whereas Roman Catholics can affirm something without necessarily denying what is not explicitly denied. Their theological epistemology is a programmatic 'both-and' one and a meaningful dialogue with Roman Catholics should take it into consideration.

Thirdly, the list of unresolved differences between Evangelicals and Catholics, namely: the Eucharist, purgatory, aspects of Mariology, papal infallibility, is another area of concern. A similar list occurred in ECT and GOS and is likely to be found in further conversations as a kind of persistent *cahier de*

doléance appended to the text. The problem is that all these theological issues are quintessentially related to the whole of the Roman Catholic system and, therefore, cannot be treated as if they were marginal, secondary aspects for theological discussion. Any real, substantial, evangelical agreement cannot be reached if issues like the above mentioned ones remain areas of theological conflict. Issues like Scripture and tradition or *communio sanctorum* are not isolated from them and require an approach which helps to relate them to the whole of the respective theological vision instead of separating them from the rest. While it is true that YWT is frank enough to admit serious standing differences between Evangelicals and Catholics, a sharper systemic awareness of Roman Catholicism could help the dialogue to resist more atomistic approaches which, while seeming more promising, are in the end less useful and productive.

Cultural Concerns and Christian Unity

The final section of YWT underlines a typical concern of the ECT process: a broad based Christian witness in a society 'marked by unbelieving ideologies and the culture of death'. Culture war continues to be a driving force of the process. This is both understandable and plausible, not only in USA but everywhere in the world. Culture war, however, should be fought with all religious and social forces which oppose 'unbelieving ideologies and the culture of death' on the basis of shared core values and in view of specific

battles. A confessional alliance is not required for culture war; a co-belligerence is instead more than sufficient to build a common front in society against the disrespect of life and the centrality of the person. If culture war is the motivation of ECT and if Evangelicals and Roman Catholics often fight together in this war, why try to base this common action on a theologically defined alliance which is utterly unlikely to be reached, namely, the Roman Catholic theological system which is closed to an Evangelical reformation? Why insist on pursuing a theologically rooted basis for co-operation when a host of theological problems remain

unsolved between two substantially different theological visions? Furthermore, are not common grace and the general influence of Christian values sufficient in themselves in allowing, indeed requiring, a co-belligerence in culture war with Roman Catholics?

All energy should be invested in promoting gospel values in society but this compelling task should not be confused with the search of an evangelical ecumenism with Roman Catholicism. The whole ECT process is at risk of blurring the distinction between co-belligerence and Christian unity. At times, the distinction may be subtle, but it is important to maintain it.

NEW FROM PATERNOSTER

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Globalization, Creation of Global Culture of Consumption and the Impact on the Church and its Mission

Tom W. Sine, Jr.

Keywords: Evangelism, futurology, economy, communication, military force, free trade, consumerism, discipleship, church membership, missions, transformation

The World Evangelical Fellowship (now Alliance) is to be commended as one of the few Christian organizations that has made a concerted effort to anticipate the impact of globalization on the church and its mission. Futurists seek to identify 'driving forces for change'. There is

a growing consensus among leaders in many of our countries that globalization is the driving force for change as we race into the 21st century. Not only is it likely to continue changing the global economic environment for all peoples, but I strongly believe that economic globalization is going to decisively impact our personal lives, the lives of our young and the church in ways we seldom discuss in our Christian forums.

Dr Tom W. Sine Jr is an author, consultant for Mustard Seed Associates and Adjunct Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Fuller Theological Seminary. He holds a Ph.D. degree in History from the University of Washington and is the author of numerous articles and several books including *Living on Purpose: Finding God's Best for Your Life* (Baker, 2002), *Mustard Seed vs. McWorld: Reinventing Life and Faith for the Future* (Baker, 1999) and *Cease Fire: Searching for Sanity in America's Culture Wars* (Eerdmans, 1995). This is revised version of a paper delivered at the International Consultation on Globalisation held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Jan. 31—Feb. 2, 2001 sponsored by the World Evangelical Fellowship/Alliance.

Even though the global economy is struggling one can still identify a range of benefits for many in our planetary community. The numerous protests throughout our world, however, call attention to the fact that numbers of people have widespread concerns regarding the impact of globalization on our poorest neighbors and the environment.

The intent of this paper is to look beyond the positive benefits and the important concerns about just and responsible development of this new global economy. I want to explore another issue regarding globalization that receives very little attention by leaders in either the larger society or the church. The issue I want to explore is how the rapid movement of peoples into a new one world economic order is shaping their aspirations and values in ways that are often at counter-point to the aspirations and values of God's kingdom.

Because we evangelicals seldom discuss the growing influence of modernity on our lives and values, we are often oblivious to the corrosive influence it has in the lives of Christians in our communities. I will also show how these changes in our values, spawned by modernization, liberalization and globalization, are not only undermining the vitality of believers and the larger church but also the capacity of the church to carry out its mission in our new global future.

Daniel K. C. Ho, a leader in the Malaysian church, stated, '... world-wide communications has transformed the world into a global village. Such globalization has made certain cultural traits and practices more international than we realize: by music, fashions, sports, branded goods, and exclusive labels which surround us in Malaysia. All this, capped with direct-to-you satellite television truly makes Malaysia a part of the global village.'¹

I had an opportunity to visit with Rene Padilla at the Urbana Missions Conference in the U.S. several years ago. He reported that this sudden movement of Latin American church into this new global village is having a devastating impact on the lives of many believers. He said that large numbers of Christians are getting caught up in the pursuit of affluence, like many North Americans, at a very high cost to their spiritual lives and their churches.

It is important for me to clarify I am not an economist. My analysis is based on a study of cultural and societal trends. As a futurist, historian and struggling missiologist I am trying to make sense of some of the ways in which globalization is likely to impact our lives, churches and the larger task of word and deed mission. Much of the research for this paper is based on my book *Mustard Seed Vs McWorld: Reinventing Life and Faith For the Future* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999).

In this paper I want to sound a wake-up call for those of us who care about the future vitality of the church and are committed to completion of both the great commission and the great commandment. I think we need to pay much more attention to the values that are an integral part of this new global economic order which influence the values of people of Christian faith all over the planet. Before we look at how globalization is impacting the church and its mission in the next 20 years let's briefly look back on what we have to celebrate regarding the mission of the church over the last 15 years.

¹ Daniel K. C. Ho, 'Into the 21st Century: Challenges Facing the Church in Malaysia,' Malaysia, 1999, p. 31.

Looking Back 1991-2004

It seems like only yesterday that many of us gathered together in Manila in 1989 to help set the direction for missions for the nineties. As you know that was a definitive conference focusing on the mission of the evangelical church in the nineties on reaching unreached people groups.

Dudley Woodberry, at the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary, stated that, 'through the efforts of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization AD 2000 and beyond and World Evangelical Fellowship, coordinated efforts are being made in church planting, especially in the 10-40 window—with considerable church growth.' And major inroads have been made in improving the physical well being of the global poor by the church as well through expanding evangelical relief and development initiatives.

One of the most encouraging signs for the future is the growth and vitality of the Third Church. As Philip Jenkins documents in *The Next Christendom*, churches in Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia have, in the nineties, experienced remarkable growth and spiritual vitality. He predicts that we will see the centre of leadership shift to the church in the two-thirds world. Hopefully this will result in the demise of western paternalism and more true partnerships in the ongoing mission of the church. I am concerned, however, that the rapid spread of this global culture of consumption could undermine the vital-

ity of the church in the two-thirds world as it is doing in the church in the one third world.

As we look ahead I will show why I believe there is reason for concern about whether the western church will even be able to sustain the present levels of mission support 2004-2024 based on declining attendance and giving patterns in the western church. I will also explain how I believe the rapidly spreading values of the global economic order are directly contributing to the declining level of Christian involvement and investment in the mission of the western church. Let's look ahead to some of the new challenges that globalization is presenting the church today and tomorrow.

Looking Ahead 2004-2024

Taking the Future Seriously

It is essential that those of us in Christian leadership mission and missiology learn to take the future seriously. Most churches and Christian mission organizations do their long range or strategic planning as though we are frozen in a time warp ... as though the future is simply going to be an extension of the present. Virtually no mission organizations forecast before they plan how the context in which they do mission or their support base in the church is likely to change.

There is also a dearth of missiological articles that seek to anticipate how both the larger global context and the changing character of the international church requires us to re-examine how we do our missiology.

In a world changing as rapidly as

ours, it is essential that we learn to lead with foresight ... that we seek to make sense of how the context in which we live, raise our young, operate our churches and do missions is likely to change. Then we need to identify how these changes will not only impact the lives of those with whom we work and the church but how the values that accompany this change are likely to shape our sense of what is important and of value. Outlined below is a brief description of the process of globalization and some of the impacts it is having on our lives, families, churches and the world in which we do mission.

A New Neighborhood

In the nineties we moved into a new neighbourhood which is discussed constantly in the business community but seldom in the church. Overnight we have moved into a new one world economic order which is dramatically changing the context in which we live, raise our young, and serve God.

Two major events have directly contributed to this process of rapid globalization. First, in the eighties we began hardwiring our planet at incredible speed into a single global electronic nervous system of satellites, fax machines and internet communications. Borders are melting. Distance is dying. \$1.5 trillion dollars circulates through this global electronic nervous system every day, directly contributing to the rapid creation of this new one world economic order.

Second, with the sudden end of the cold war all the centrally planned

economies were thrown into the trash bin and for the first time in history virtually all nations in the world joined the free market race to the top. Dorothy said to her dog Toto in the Wizard of Oz, 'I don't think we are in Kansas anymore.' And we aren't in the seventies, eighties or nineties anymore either. We have moved into a new neighbourhood that we have never lived in before—a one world economic order.

There are many upsides to this new global economy. It is creating jobs, and increasing wealth for a number of privileged people in many different countries—particularly the United States. The internet has become an avenue for increasing international understanding and creating new forms of advocacy for justice, peacemaking and the care of creation. This new global economy has become in itself a tremendous force for promoting global stability for the simple reason that doing war gets in the way of doing business.

I wrote in *Mustard Seed Vs McWorld* in 1999 that those committed to growing this new global economy won't tolerate it being threatened by terrorist acts like the horrific events of September 11th. Remember that this wasn't just an attack on America but really an assault on globalization as well. 'I predict that if terrorism does increase, those who are intent on protecting the emerging global economy will take decisive, repressive action to try to quell the threat.'²

² Tom Sine, *Mustard Seed Vs McWorld: Reinventing Life and Faith for the Future* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), p. 78-79.

The military attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq reflect a troubling new departure in American foreign policy that is attempting to create a new era of *Pax Americana* and to increase national security by expanding American influence throughout the world by the use of preemptive military force. But those attacks were also intended to create a more stable and predictable environment for the entire global economy.

Global Economy Down Turn

As the world is recovering from the war in Iraq and the SARS threat, it isn't clear, as I write, whether the new global economy is going to get back on track or not. The Japanese economy continues to struggle and the European economy is beginning to slide. It looks as if it is up to the American economy to be the engine of growth to pull the entire global economy through this tough patch. But no one knows whether the American economy can rise to the challenge. Therefore, the most optimistic forecasts project a period of very slow growth for the global economy 2004 to 2005. Some economists are predicting, given all the uncertainties, that a global recession is also a very real possibility.

There is good reason for concern. Even the strongest advocates for this new global economy tell us that it is very volatile and isn't well put together—many are playing by different rules. There is growing evidence that numbers of corporations and investment institutions are playing fast and loose with the rules which are caus-

ing many investors, all over the world, to lose confidence in economic institutions. Also, as this new economy becomes increasingly inter-dependent and interconnected, all our national and regional economies become more vulnerable. For example, if one area of the global economy, like the US, sneezes, there is a growing danger of everyone catching a cold. Church leaders everywhere need to prepare people for the possibilities of a slow up-turn or a serious economic recession.

Future of the Global Poor

Let me be clear. The architects of McWorld are eager to have all the world's people become a part of a global labour pool and eager consumers in the global macro-mall. There are numbers who have already found jobs and are able to increase their way of life a bit. But the reality, to this point, is that this new global economy is an assets-based economy that works much better for those with assets than for those without.

In the nineties we saw an unprecedented explosion of wealth among the top 20%—the creation of more millionaires and billionaires than during any decade in history. However, the bottom 20% actually lost ground in this brutally competitive race to the top. The United Nations Development Program states that thirty years ago the poorest 20% of the world's population earned 2.3% of the world's income. Now they earn only 1.4% and that amount is still declining. At the same time the richest 20% increased their share of

global income from 70% to 80%.³ Economic globalization has benefited a number at the margins in East Asia, but very few of the marginalized in Africa and Latin America have experienced the promised lift off.

One of the major foundation blocks of this new economy is the doctrine of global free trade. The architects of this global economy hold this doctrine with almost religious devotion. Simply stated, the doctrine of global free trade asserts if we are all allowed to own one another's banks and phone companies and fish in one another's ponds it will automatically 'raise all boats'. Early evidence seems to suggest that global free trade raises all yachts but there is no evidence yet that it will ever raise all boats.

Even though global population growth is slowing, it will still grow from 6.2 billion today to 8 to 10 billion by 2050. Of course most of that growth will be among our poorest neighbours in densely congested urban areas. Today almost half of the global poor are under 15. Some estimates suggest this emerging population will need between 1.2 to 2 billion new jobs by the year 2020. Therefore, even those mission organizations involved in church planting need to be involved in micro-enterprise development, vocational training and girl child education.

One other trend should concern us. In this very competitive global

race to the top a number of western countries are trying to find ways to reduce the drag on their national economies by cutting back spending on foreign aid abroad and social programs at home. European economies are going to be under growing pressure in this race to the top to shift from a stakeholder economy, in which they have offered generous social benefits, to more of a shareholder economy like that of United States and Britain. This means that the church and private sector will increasingly be asked to address the growing physical needs of those left behind in this new global economic order.

In America we are seeing the most dramatic cutbacks in programs to the American poor while the government is encouraging more reliance on faith based initiatives. I predict, because of the increasing costs of the war on terror, and the costs of rebuilding Iraq, we will see mounting expectations that the church fund more initiatives to help the poor to help themselves at home and abroad. But we need to ask if the American and the western church is going to be able to find the resources necessary to respond to this growing challenge.

Future of the Middle Class

Regrettably, while many middle class people in all of our countries are making more money as a result of the boom years of the new global economy, that isn't the entire story. Everywhere my wife and I work in Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United

³ 'A Global Poverty Trap,' *The Economist*, July 2, 1996, p. 34.

States people tell us they are working harder and longer. In 1977 less than half of families in the US relied on dual incomes. Today it has dramatically increased to two thirds and is still climbing. Some women are working simply to help pay the bills and keep their heads above water. Others are working to be able to buy extras.⁴ This very competitive new global economy wants more of our time and more of our lives.

The Harris Poll reports that the average American spent 41 hours at work in 1973. In 1997 that had increased 10 hours to 51 hours a week.⁵ As we gallop into a new century, McWorld will insist that we spend even more of our waking hours at work. In fact, we have, in the past decade, seen the creation of something altogether new: the 24/7 work week. In other words, growing numbers of people will never leave work. They will be on-line and on-call 24 hours a day 7 days a week. These trends mean that many middle-class Christians in all of our countries will have less time left over for family, prayer, scripture, church and less time to volunteer for mission activities at home or abroad.⁶

The McWorld global economy wants not only more of our time but also more of our money. This new boom economy isn't just an assets-based economy but also a sharehold-

er economy. Shareholders don't want a 3% to 5% return on their investment. They want a 15% to 30% return—if they can get it. The only way that can happen is for all of us to be persuaded to consume at levels never seen before on this planet—so that yesterday's luxuries become today's necessities. And the messages are working. Americans have the lowest saving rate in 60 years and the highest personal bankruptcy rates. Apparently many Americans are bingeing out of their savings and on other people's money.

As a part of the need to get the boom economy booming again our young are facing escalating pressure to consume at levels not conceived of even a few years ago. 'You must get kids branded by age 5 if you want to have them as faithful consumers of your product', admonished a marketing executive in a corporate training session on the PBS documentary *Affluenza*.⁷ If you have ever tried to get a five year old past McDonalds, you know how effective these marketers are.

This is about more than global consumerism. I believe we are facing a crisis of formation in the western church that will spread to the entire church in the very near future. A recent report states that the average American child is on-line 37 1/2 hours a week—TV, MTV, video games and computers. Plus, that

⁴ Tamar Lewin, 'Men Assuming Bigger Share At Home, New Survey Shows,' *The New York Times*, April 15, 1998, p. A16.

⁵ The Harris Poll #31, Table 2, 'Work Hours Per Week', July 7, 1997, p. 3.

⁶ Shelley Donald Coolidge, 'Work and Spend Cycle Makes Company Slaves', *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 4, 1995, p. 9.

⁷ 'Affluenza, Warning: Materialism May Be Hazardous to Your Health', *UTNE Reader*, September-October 1997, p. 19.

same child is exposed to 3,000 to 5,000 advertisements a week. Isn't an hour of Sunday school a week absurd in light of this level of input? Isn't the influence of home, church and family likely to be increasingly eroded as the marketers of McWorld dramatically increase their influence in shaping the worldview, preferences, and values of the next generation to persuade them to increase their consumption?

Future of World Evangelization

What are the new challenges facing the international church and its mission in this new global future? In the West there is a growing hunger for spirituality. But frankly, there is little interest in what most of our evangelical churches are offering. Many of those who hunger for spirituality are looking for a vital whole life faith. They find little in the 15-minutes-in-the-morning/church-on-Sunday faith, in which our lives seem to simply reflect the values of modern consumer culture the rest of the week.

All of our churches will be challenged not only to do more in addressing the mounting physical needs that fill our planet but in meeting the growing spiritual challenges as well. What isn't generally recognized is that we are actually going backwards, not forwards in world evangelization. Peter Brierley of the Christian Research Association reported that in the year 2000, 28% of the world's people identify themselves as some brand of Christian: Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox. Because population growth is outstripping the slow growth of the

global church the percentage will decline to 27% in 2010 and continue to decline after that.⁸

I am convinced that the international church also has some new competitors that are rarely mentioned at evangelical missions conferences. Those who are doing a brilliant job at world 'evangelization' are the marketers of McWorld. Two Pentecostal pastors, from the Dominican Republic, came up to me after I had spoken about globalization at a WEF conference in British Columbia. They reported that in the previous five years they had both lost their entire youth groups. When I asked how that happened, they explained that five years ago American MTV came to town and had a major influence in the lives of their youth that they hadn't found a way to contend with.

In the last fifteen years we have witnessed the creation of something we have never seen before: a borderless global youth culture. Everywhere we travel we find young people wearing the same jeans, drinking the same soda and hard-wired into the same American pop-consumer culture. They have much more in common with the youth in our western countries than the traditional cultures from which they come.⁹

There is compelling evidence that the marketers of McWorld aren't just selling products to the global young.

⁸ Peter Brierley, *Future Church: A Global Analysis of the Christian Community to the year 2010* (London: Monarch Books, 1998), p. 33.

⁹ Katherine Q. Seelye, 'Future U.S.: Grayer and More Hispanic', *The New York Times*, March 27, 1997, p.A18.

They are consciously at work seeking to persuade the young to embrace the same values so they will all buy the same products so they will become part of a homogenized culture of consumption. You see the church is in a battle for the hearts and minds of a new generation which requires some whole new mission strategies that can challenge and supplant some of the seductive messages of the ever expanding global mall.

Future of the Western Church

While there is a growing hunger for spirituality in the West, church attendance statistics in continental Europe are in free fall as it rapidly becomes a post-Christian culture. Virtually all old-line denominations in all the western countries are graying and declining. The growth of evangelical and Pentecostal churches in many of our western countries doesn't alter this pattern of decline. Church attendance in Britain fell from 10.2% in 1980 to just below 7% in 2003. In Australia weekly attendance is closer to 10 percent and declining. Research in New Zealand suggests their attendance is a little higher, 17 percent but in decline. In Canada the falling attendance rate is closer to 19 percent.

In the United States the Catholic church is still experiencing a bit of growth primarily due to immigration. But mainline denominations are in serious decline in part because mainline Protestants are aging much more rapidly than the society at

large.¹⁰ For example, there are twice as many ELCA Lutherans over 75 as in the general population.¹¹ The Presbyterians, the United Church of Christ, the American Baptists, and the United Methodists are all dealing with the twin hits of declining numbers and graying congregations.

The major growth in the US, as elsewhere in the West, is among immigrant groups. The growing edge also includes: Black and Hispanic congregations, Assemblies of God, The Vineyard, The Evangelical Free, and the Covenant Church in America. But this growth doesn't offset the overall trend.

Since the fifties George Gallup has placed American church attendance at a relatively constant 40% to 45%. But since these figures are based on self-reported attendance there has been growing scepticism among other demographers of their validity.

To check the validity of this kind of self-reporting method, Kirk Hadaway, a demographer for the United Church of Christ, had his research team count cars in church parking lots in a small Ohio county over a period of several months. 'His finding: Americans over-report their actual church attendance by a marked degree. Actual attendance is closer to 24 percent, Hadaway said, and is falling slowly.'¹² This research

¹⁰ John and Sylvia Ronsvalle, 'The end of benevolence? Alarming trends in church giving', *The Christian Century*, October 23, 1996, p. 1012.

¹¹ 'Trends Affecting the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,' ELCA Department of research and Evaluation, December, 27, 1966, p. 1.

¹² Robert Marquand, 'Preaching to Empty Pews,' *Chicago Sun Times*, February 22, 1998, p. 45.

puts American church attendance closer to that of the other western countries.

While the American church is still experiencing very slow growth it is actually shrinking in relationship to the growth of the total American population. According to the research of the Empty Tomb, American Christians constituted 45% of the total population in 1968. By 1998 that had declined to 39% and is likely to drop dramatically by 2010 because of the rapid graying of the mainline denominations.

The Church and the under 35s

The missing generation in the church in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States are the under 35s. As we travel, we witness the young are disappearing from our churches in alarming numbers.

In his seminars George Barna says the 'Buster generation' [born between 1965 and 1983], age 17-35, is the first generation in America which isn't starting life with some kind of clear Christian heritage. The 'Buster generation' in the US attend church significantly less than any other generation.¹³ If the western church is to have a future we need to strategically target the evangelization of the under 35. We must also give the Christian young who are with the church greater responsibility for leading and reinventing the church for the twenty-first century.

The under 35s in the West have hit

this new boom economy at a particularly tough time. While some are landing high paying jobs in business and computer shops, many aren't finding jobs and many will never achieve the lifestyle levels of their parents and grandparents' generation. Why is this the case? Because the relationship of what the young can earn to what they can buy has changed dramatically since I was a young man. First, this generation of college students is running the highest debt load of any prior generation. This seriously limits these grads being involved in mission. Secondly, while my generation seldom spent much over 20% of our income on rent or mortgage we find a surprising number on the under 35 who are spending over 50% of their income for rent or mortgage—in all our western countries.

This means in the next 20 years fewer young people are likely to stay with the church. And those that do are likely to have less discretionary income left over than older generations. This means that as the young move into leadership in the western church they will not be able to sustain the present level of funding for the church and its mission. This is likely to have a dire impact on the future of missions support of the western church.

The problem with declining numbers in all our western churches, of course, is that it automatically reduces the amount of time and money available from the western church to invest in the advancement of God's kingdom in world mission. Declining giving patterns in the

¹³ 'Church Attendance by Generation,' Barna Research Group Limited, July 8, 1998.

American church will probably further compound the crisis in missions funding in the American church.

The Incredible Shrinking American Purse

The amount of money given to many churches in the U.S. was up during the last years of the boom economy. However, in 2003 virtually every Christian missions organization reported a serious decline in giving as the American economy struggles to get started again. But research reveals that per capita giving patterns of the American church has actually been in decline for over 30 years.

The Empty Tomb, which does some of the most helpful research on giving patterns in the American church, reports from 1968 to 1998 US per capita income increased 91%. But per capita giving of church members during the same period declined almost 19% from 3.10% in 1968 to 2.52% in 1998. Even more concerning, benevolence giving declined 40% during the same period.¹⁴

Between 2010 and 2030 the church will take a major economic hit when the baby boomer generation retire. The boomers, born between 1946 and 1984, are 77 million strong. All the western governments are constantly attempting to anticipate how the retirement of the boomer generation is likely to impact their retirement pension and

health care systems. But in the American church very few leaders are forecasting the potential impact the retirement of the boomers generation will have on the church. Churches are likely to see a sharp decline in giving as the boomers retire. However, they represent potentially a huge new volunteer core for the kingdom if they can be recruited before they head for the resorts.

My reluctant forecast, in light of all these trends, is that the western church will not even be able to sustain its present levels of giving to the church and its mission, let alone increase them to address new and growing challenges facing our poorest neighbours. If we fail to reach significant numbers of the young in all our western countries and challenge Christians of all changes raise the bar on personal stewardship, then the church in the two thirds world will have to provide a much larger share of the resources for mission.

Values Impact of Globalization on the Church

Why are western churches experiencing declining levels of attendance, involvement, volunteering and giving? Why are we failing to keep the young that are raised in the church and failing to reach the young outside the church? Why do we seem to be experiencing not only declining levels of involvement and giving but declining levels of spiritual vitality in many of our churches?

Of course there are a number of answers to these tough questions

¹⁴ John & Sylvia Ronsvalle, *The State of Church Giving through 1998* (Champaign: Empty Tomb Inc., 2000), p. 7.

that include changing demographics, out-moded forms of church and outreach. We are also witnessing changing patterns of involvement in all types of associations in western culture. But I am convinced that one of the major causes, which we seldom discuss in the church, is the growing influence of the values of modern western culture and economic globalism on Christians everywhere.

As I assess how I believe the values of this new global economy are impacting the church I want to be very clear. I am not proposing the creation of an alternative to free market capitalism. There is a very good reason that centrally planned Marxist economies have been abandoned. They don't work well. The free market is better at producing goods and services than any other system I am aware of.

However, while some treat the free market as though it is simply a values-free economic mechanism for selling goods and services, I don't. Nor do I share some of the almost religious reverence towards the free market that some American evangelicals reflect. I will attempt to show that some of the values-assumptions on which free market economics are based are directly counter to biblical values. In addition, the way the free market operates tends to be blind to ethical issues. If there is a buyer and a seller then the free market is blind towards the ethical issues that might be a part of that exchange. For example, in the last five years the back street pornography shops have become respected on-line businesses, as has gambling.

Buying into the Wrong Dream

Let me explain why I don't believe that our new global economy is simply a neutral or value free means of economic exchange. Global free market capitalism has its roots in the Enlightenment and is a part of a larger world view born of that age. At the very centre of our new one world economic order and modern western culture is a vision for the better future, born of the Enlightenment and the doctrine of economic liberalization. It is a dream that strongly believes in the inevitability of economic and social progress, called the 'Western Dream' or the 'American Dream'. This dream defines the notion of the good life and better future almost exclusively in terms of economic growth and individual economic up-scaling. This is the dream that powers and directs the rapid spread of the new global economy all over the planet.

This is not, of course, a new dream. The process of western modernization has been going on for decades. What is new is that with the creation of this new global economy the process of modernization has been dramatically accelerated. As a consequence, the Western Dream and the American Dream of individual economic upscaling is rapidly becoming the dream for people everywhere, including deeply committed Christians. My concern is that many of the cardinal values of this dream, including individualism, the pursuit of self-interest, materialism and consumerism, are directly counter to the vision and values of God's kingdom.

God's new order is committed to a very different vision for the global future that is devoted to societal transformation instead of the pursuit of economic self interest. It operates from a very different set of values, as well, that include service to others, celebrating life and faith and the joy of giving life away.

Why are we seeing declining levels of involvement and investment in the work of God in the western church? I am convinced that one of the major reasons is that many of us western Christians have allowed modern culture and the new global economy to define for us what is important and of value in terms of getting ahead in the work place and our own personal lifestyles. Our views of what is important and of value defines in turn where we spend our time and money.

As the marketers of McWorld increasingly bombard us and our young with the messages that our identity and self worth comes from what we buy and consume I believe we will see patterns of declining involvement of not only western Christians but among believers all over the world. I sincerely believe if this pattern continues it will not only result in increasing erosion of levels of involvement and investment but it will sap the very vitality of our communities of faith. We must not only help Christians to reject these values but enable them to create new models of whole life faith, that reflect the aspirations and values of God's new order instead of the aspirations and values of the new one world economic order. To understand why so

many Christians of genuine faith have been seduced by the values of the new one world economic order we need to examine some of our unstated assumptions.

Asking the Right Question

Why have evangelical leaders everywhere, but particularly in the United States, been slow to challenge this growing secularization of our congregations by modernity's new global culture of consumption?

The first reason is that many economists would have us believe that their economic practice is 'science' and therefore has nothing to do with values. They would argue that economics is simply the cold detached laws of supply and demand at work. Rob van Drimmelen, in an important book, *Faith in the Global Economy*, calls for the demystification of economics. He persuasively points out that the assumptions on which modern economics are based are far from being value free.¹⁵ For example, there is an assumption that there is no place for the influence of a creator God in modern economics. It is a theoretical system largely divorced from faith, culture, the environment, politics, and human life. We are encouraged rather to trust the secular providence of the 'invisible hand' of the marketplace to define the course of the human future.

While the Bible speaks out very clearly about greed being evil, modern economics baptizes acquisitive

¹⁵ Rob van Drimmelen, *Faith in the Global Economy: A Primer for Christians* (WCC publications, 1998), p. 1-6.

behaviour and greed as not only normative but as desirable. While biblical faith encourages us to derive our sense of identity and self-worth from being image bearers of the living God, the marketplace encourages us to derive our identity and self-worth from what we buy and what we consume. My greatest concern regarding this new global economy is the way it seeks fundamentally to redefine the sense of what is 'ultimate' principally in economic terms. At our core I am sure that no thoughtful Christian would ever settle for defining the ultimate principally in economic terms. Wouldn't we be more likely to define the ultimate in terms of spiritual, societal and creational transformation?

The second reason is that we evangelicals have been very selective where we chose to do battle with modern culture. Many American evangelicals will endlessly battle modernity over personal morality issues like porn on the internet and we should. But we tend to treat all the other value messages from modern culture (such as the pursuit of self interest, individualism, materialism and consumerism) as though they are value neutral. Not only aren't they neutral, I sincerely believe that the aspirations and values of the global consumer culture are rapidly replacing traditional values and undermining the values of Christians everywhere. Again, this poses a serious threat to the vitality and the authenticity of our lives and witness and the extent to which we invest our time and resources in the work of God's new order.

The third reason I believe many of us have succumbed to the aspirations and values of McWorld is that many of us evangelicals have unwittingly settled for a dualistic form of discipleship in which we live our lives on two separate tracks. On the spiritual track we are, at our best, totally committed to Christ, we live with moral integrity and maintain consistent religious practices. But on the other track our lives are virtually indistinguishable from our non-believing neighbours.

We American evangelicals often tend to be just as caught up as they are in getting a piece of the rock, buying expensive homes and defining the good life as getting ahead economically. We don't seem to recognize that we aren't just buying houses, cars and RV vehicles, we are buying into the status and the values that go with them. The number one reason evangelical college students in the States are not going into mission is the resistance of their Christian parents who insist on their young getting their house, car and pension system underway first. And then after they have all the things they can go to visit missionaries during their vacations. In the US context many Christian leaders have started receiving very large CEO salaries in the last fifteen years. As a result, numbers of them are living in very wealthy communities which makes it difficult for them to address this issue.

We need to call believers in all of our societies from this dualistic model to 'whole life discipleship' in which we invite God to transform us not only spiritually and morally but cul-

turally too. Then our lifestyle priorities will no longer be defined by our income levels or the aspirations of the global consumer mall but by the values of God's kingdom. If we can help our people become whole life disciples of Christ by inviting God to transform our cultural values too I can assure you it will result in all of us being able to free up more time and money to invest in the work of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

New Responses

Clearly business as usual won't begin to respond to the mounting challenges of tomorrow's world or of the reality of the incredibly shrinking western church. Let me try out a few unusual ideas of how we might respond to this serious crisis of faith, values and investment. I believe that all of us who are committed to the completion of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment will need radically to reinvent much of what we do in our lives and congregations to address this crisis.

I find that many operate as though all the important questions regarding what it means to be a disciple of Christ and how we steward our entire lives have been answered. I believe we need to revisit those assumptions and do some fresh biblical reflection on what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The first question I am inclined to start with is: 'how do we as followers of Jesus get off the track?' In other words, what is our view of secularism? Virtually the only explanation of how we have got off the track is the secular humanist critique. I don't happen to believe that

this view is credible either biblically or historically. Let me suggest another critique that traces the problem much more directly to the Enlightenment than to the Age of Humanism.

How We got off the Track

I believe one of the major reasons we are likely to see continuing decline in attendance and giving in the western church and continuing failure in the battle of the formation of our young is that many of us have unwittingly bought into the same aspirations and values that power McWorld. I believe in our dualistic discipleship view many of us have succumbed to the Western Dream which defines the good life and better future in terms of individual economic upscaling, consumerism and materialism. And then we embrace the gospel of Jesus too in a small spiritual compartment of our lives as though it all fits neatly together. And of course it doesn't. Most tragically, western missions have often exported this kind of dualistic compartmentalized faith all over the world.

Latin American missiologist Orlando Costas has indicted the western church for exporting a culturally accommodated gospel all over the world that calls people to "a conscience-soothing Jesus, with an unscandalous cross; an other worldly kingdom; a private inwardly, individualistically limited Holy Spirit; a pocket God; a spiritualized Bible" and a church that escapes the gut issues of society. It has conceived the goal of the gospel as "a happy, comfortable and successful life" It has

made possible “the ‘conversion’ of men and women without having to make any drastic changes in their lifestyles and world views,” guaranteeing thereby “the preservation of the status quo and the immobility of the people of God.”¹⁶

A Biblical Vision for all of Life

The only way we can begin to contend with the seductions of McWorld is to offer people in communities of faith a more compelling dream than the Western Dream. We need a reawakening of biblical imagination. We need to rediscover that God’s agenda for globalization begins with a mustard seed but it is destined to transform a world. The scripture teaches that God intends to create a new heaven and a new earth in which all things are made new. It is a vision of a great international homecoming of the resurrected people of God coming from every tongue, tribe and nation to a restored creation. It is a future in which the blind see, the deaf hear and the lame dance. It is a new global order in which justice comes for the poor, the instruments of warfare are transformed into the instruments of peace and festive banqueting and celebration will welcome us home. We need to help believers everywhere place the purposes of God’s kingdom, instead of the aspirations of the global economy, at the centre of their entire lives.

A Whole Life Faith

To overcome our dualistic discipleship and our compartmentalized faith it is not enough to embrace this vision of the kingdom of God theologically. We need to embrace it culturally also, as an alternative vision of the good life and the better future to the one that powers this new global economy. It will no longer work for us to give our lives unquestioningly to the aspirations of modern culture and seek to serve Jesus too.

Imagine a ten week course in which believers in a church could not only study God’s kingdom purposes but embrace them as their own for all of life. Then they would use that sense of God’s vision for the human future to draft personal and family mission statements. Finally, in this class they would be invited to use those mission statements not only to redefine the good life for themselves but to reinvent where their time and money goes and raising their kids on purpose.

This could result in believers creating a liturgy of life that looked more like the kingdom than the McWorld shopping mall. It would be one in which daily time is set aside for spirituality, weekly time is set aside for witness and service and a significant portion of the income is set aside to advance God’s kingdom around the world.¹⁷

¹⁶ Orlando E. Costas, *The Integrity of Mission: The inner life and the Outreach of the Church* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 17.

¹⁷ Christine & Tom Sine, *Living on Purpose: Finding God’s Best for your Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002).

A Whole Life Church

With the growing pressure of this new global economy, defining church as a place that we go to once a week will no longer be adequate. I am convinced that in the twenty-first century we will need to reinvent the church as new missional communities where we live seven days a week and where we also happen to worship. Rockridge Methodist Church in Oakland California is one of the first models of a new missional church. Not only has this church reinvented itself to place mission at the centre of congregational life but its members have just completed construction of a nine-unit Christian cooperative in an inner city neighbourhood near the church where twenty-five members have relocated to do tutoring with neighbourhood kids and be a witness for God's kingdom. Living in this cooperative community reduces their lifestyle costs so they have more time and money left over to invest in mission. And the formation of the young is not left to an hour of Sunday School a week but it is a part of the daily activity of this new celebrative expression of church.

A New Generation of Leaders

One of the most encouraging trends in the western church, in spite of declining numbers of the under 35, is that God is raising up a new generation of 20 and 30 year olds in Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States to lead the church into the twenty-first century. This postmodern generation is fundamentally reinventing the church, creating

new forms of church plants, urban ministries and celebrations that bear witness to God's great homecoming celebration. This movement has very little visibility and little support from the established church. If the western church is to have a future we must give our fullest support to this new generation of leaders and invite them to help reinvent the church for the twenty-first century in partnership with the third church to address the new challenges of our new one world economic order.

WEF—A New Opportunity

In 1980 the WEF Commission on Ethics and Society met in Britain with their counterparts on the Lausanne Theology and Education Commission to deal explicitly with the issue of how evangelical Christians all over the world steward their lives to advance the cause of God's kingdom. 'An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle' was the product of that conference. This statement reads in part, 'Our Christian obedience demands a simple lifestyle ... We intend to reexamine our income and expenditure, in order to manage on less and give more away ... We resolve to renounce waste and oppose extravagance in personal living, clothing and housing, travel and church buildings. We also accept distinctions between necessities and luxuries ... and between service to God and slavery to fashion.'¹⁸ Initially this WEF state-

¹⁸ Ron Sider, ed., *Lifestyles in the Eighties: An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), p. 16.

ment and several related books of the period had a profound impact on evangelicals all over the world. I know personally of a number of Christians who really did change their lifestyle priorities 'to live more simply than others might simply live.'

Frankly, as I read these words in the American evangelical context in 2003 it seems like a totally foreign message. The American church benefited enormously from the new boom global economy. We have palatial buildings and all kinds of high powered programs. But I simply can't remember reading anything published in the last ten years that has the edge this statement does. Certainly I have read nothing in evangelical literature that challenges us to ignore fashion, distinguish between necessities and luxuries or call people to reduce their personal lifestyle costs to free-up more time or money to invest in mission.

I believe this is a WEF opportunity. It is an opportunity for the WEF Theological Commission to do some fresh work on: first, how the global consumer culture is undermining vital Christian faith and how we can

help believers in different cultures decode the messages and resist the seduction of the Western Dream; and second, how to rediscover the theology of the kingdom of God as an alternative cultural dream to the western dream as a springboard to enable believers to create lifestyles, time styles and celebration that look more like the kingdom banquet than the global economic order.

I believe this is a WEF opportunity for all of us to create curricula to enable our adults and young people to become whole life disciples creating more festive lives in which we put God's mission purposes first. We can free up much more of our time and money to invest in the mission of Jesus Christ to the mounting needs, challenges and opportunities of our new global future. I am sure we would be surprised at how God could use our mustard seeds to not only reverse many of the trends discussed in this paper but to bring a new period of expansion of God's kingdom globally ... if we choose to put God's purposes first ... in all of our lives and communities.

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III Ph.D.

Gregory W. Dawes

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The Challenge of History to
Religious Authority*

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Steven S. Tuell

*First and Second Chronicles
INTERPRETATION: A Bible
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and significance of the
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Mark A. Noll

*The Old Religion in a New
World: The History of North
American Christianity*

Book Reviews

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**The Historical Jesus Question:
The Challenge of History to
Religious Authority**

Gregory W. Dawes

Louisville/London/Leiden:
Westminster/John Knox, 2001
ISBN 0-664-22458-X
xiii + 392 pp. Paper

*H. H. Drake Williams, III Ph.D.,
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In this volume Gregory W. Dawes, a lecturer in Religious Studies at the University of Otago, New Zealand, addresses the challenge that history

makes to religious authority. This challenge was something that he could not cover in his previous anthology, *The Historical Jesus Quest*, which discussed the contributions to the historical Jesus discussion made by eleven authors from the seventeenth century through the mid-twentieth century. This sequel, however, focuses on the challenge that history makes to religious authority while paying attention to the historical Jesus discussion.

Dawes begins by examining the ideas that emerged from the seventeenth century. He identifies five factors that led to a 'great reversal' in the view of religious and biblical

authority. These factors were: a new sense of the past, the disillusionment over religious controversy, the new astronomy of Galileo and Copernicus, the sea voyages of discovery, and the limits of reliable knowledge. Each of these ideas contributed an unprecedented challenge towards religious authority and biblical authority since they pit historical knowledge against the biblical witness. These ideas from the seventeenth century also became the foundation that other theologians accepted, adapted, or shielded themselves from in years to come, which Dawes portrays in the following chapters.

In these subsequent chapters Gregory W. Dawes presents lengthy and detailed chapters dealing with the following theologians: Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677), David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923), Karl Barth (1886-1968), Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), Ernst Käsemann (1906-1998), and Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928-present). He categorizes their viewpoints on religious and biblical authority in three ways. Either they abandon theology as traditionally known (i.e., Spinoza and Strauss), they reformulate Christian claims in the light of the claims of the seventeenth century (i.e., Schweitzer, Troeltsch, Bultmann, Käsemann, Pannenberg), or they attempt to shield traditional claims from the corrosive effect of historic criticism (i.e., Barth and Bultmann). For Dawes, none of these scholars has provided a convincing way to

address the problems that emerged from the seventeenth century. The scholar whose thinking may be most fruitful for future thinking on this matter, however, according to Dawes is Ernest Troeltsch.

Dawes' treatment of the challenge of history to religious authority is a thorough one. He has rightly identified five factors that have challenged religious scholars about biblical and religious authority from the times of the seventeenth century. He has also summarised and analysed the contributions of these eight theologians. His treatment of these authors will be a great help to those wanting to understand these theologians and will save the student of these theologians much valuable time. His study will also interest pastors and theologians who grapple with the challenge to religious authority or who want to gain a greater understanding of the historical Jesus debate.

There are some weak points to this work, however. Firstly, the name of the volume is misleading. From the title I was expecting much more attention to be paid to the historical Jesus debate instead of the question history poses to religious authority. Perhaps, if one had read Dawes' previous anthology (which I did not), the title of the work would not appear as misleading.

Secondly, Dawes' conclusions seem too negative. While he has adequately characterised and summarised the views of these eight scholars and exposed the deficiencies of these thinkers to address this subject, there are other ideas currently that may counter decaying

religious authority. While the challenge to religious and biblical authority may be increasing, certainly not every Christian is challenging religious authority. Some of the most trusting of religious authority may be in church life today.

A second approach that Christians are taking to religious authority is a renewed interest in historical theology. Historical theology found in the forms of creeds, catechisms, and historic teachings from the early church and the Reformation is strengthening religious and biblical authority in Christian circles today. Dawes does not sufficiently develop these ideas.

All in all, though, Gregory W. Dawes has provided a thorough volume on the challenge to religious authority from the discipline of history. One hopes that his analysis will strengthen proper religious authority in the church in years ahead and give greater credence to the Jesus recorded within the Bible.

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One Body in Christ: the history and significance of the Evangelical Alliance

Ian Randall and David Hilborn
 Carlisle: Paternoster Press and
 Evangelical Alliance: 2001
 ISBN 1-84227-089-3

Pb 394pp index illus appendix

*reviewed by David Parker, Editor,
 Evangelical Review of Theology*

There is no doubt that the Evangelical Alliance of the United Kingdom has provided a worthy model of

Alliance work, ever since the movement was founded in that country in 1846. Now the authors of this book have documented with clarity, insight and conviction the history of the organization, revealing in the process some of the key dynamics, both positive and negative, which have contributed to its success. Both the authors, Ian Randall of Spurgeon's College and the International Baptist Seminary of Prague, a prolific author on evangelicalism, and David Hilborn, Theological Advisor to the EA, have once again proved their ability to handle such a task, compressing a vast amount of material into an extremely readable volume.

The book builds on some previous publications, but accesses a great deal of previously unpublished material as it works its way from the original international efforts to establish the Alliance in the mid-19th century, on through the work of the British organization in the subsequent decades and concluding as its launches itself as a 'Movement for Change' into the new millennium. The story is replete with helpful information about the context, cameos of personalities, and assessments of progress (conveniently summarized at the end of each chapter), although occasionally a little more general background is assumed of the general reader than might be justified, and occasionally discussion of the general state of evangelicalism and the church takes over from the story of the EA itself. Some attention is also paid to the global and wider European contacts, but of necessity this is

of a summary nature. More attention is properly paid to the impact of American influences, both directly on the EA as a body and indirectly on the evangelical movement in the country through, for example, the advent of crusade evangelism.

The emphasis of the story falls on the inner dynamic of the Alliance and the contribution of its key leaders and participants as it moves from period to period, with the repeated focus on evangelical identity and unity, encouragement to prayer, spirituality and evangelism, and the practical expression of the gospel in terms of social witness, welfare and justice. Blessed with gifted leadership that responded to the needs of the day, the remarkable impact of the Alliance in recent decades is revealed in this account as a continuation of its character over many generations.

Since its foundation, theological, ecclesiastical and spiritual issues (as well as more pragmatic concerns like evangelism and prayer) have been given serious attention by the Alliance. In recent years matters such as evangelical identity, the nature of hell, the 'Toronto Blessing' and sexuality have been on the agenda, but as contemporary as they may seem, similar topics were dealt with in previous generations. Besides these specific issues, the authors document the way the Alliance has dealt throughout its history with general theological, church and social trends such as Tractarianism, Liberal Theology, Ecumenism, Neo-Orthodoxy the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement and the impact of wars and political change.

'One Body in Christ' is an important contribution to our understanding of an Alliance which has succeeded over many years in representing and uniting evangelicals in fellowship, common witness and faith despite many differences and immense generational changes. Perhaps the most striking factor accounting for this success according to this book has been the strong positive thrust of the Alliance as it saw its mission to promote evangelical unity on sound but broad doctrinal lines, stoutly expressed in mission, witness and service within a robust framework of prayer and holiness. Church and social conditions in the United Kingdom have permitted this goal to be realized through an umbrella para-church organization to the benefit of the church and society alike.

Illustrations, an appendix of doctrinal statements and an index add to the usefulness of this volume.

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The Old Religion in a New World: The History of North American Christianity

Mark A. Noll

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002

ISBN 0-8028-4948-2

340 pp., Pb. Bibl., index

*Reviewed by Richard V. Pierard,
Gordon College, MA U.S.A.*

Mark Noll is a leading evangelical scholar of American Christianity. His extraordinary literary output, with more than fourteen books and edit-

ed works and innumerable essays, has earned him the respect and admiration of all who labour in the field. Moreover, early training in German history provided him with a grasp of the European background to the American church that is largely lacking in the more parochial works by U.S. scholars. In his landmark *History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (1992) and various conference volumes, such as *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990* (1994), co-edited with David Bebbington and George Rawlyk, Noll awakened American church historians to events north of the border. By encouraging them to consider the trans-Atlantic connections of the faith, he contributed significantly to the growing awareness of the global dimensions of evangelicalism.

These themes underscore Noll's latest book, which situates the 'old religion' of Europe in the 'new world' of America and shows how the various expressions of American Christianity adapted to their surroundings. By creatively intertwining thematic and chronological chapters he traces the events and developments within the history of the Christian churches that were either transported from Europe or arose indigenously within North America. He also examines some of the major interpretive issues within American Christian history, and in a novel manner ties Christianity in Mexico into the larger North American story. Noll's grasp of the literature of North American church

history is truly prodigious, which he shares with his readers by providing an up-to-date bibliography of 510 items that can guide theological institutions and individual scholars endeavouring to build their own library collections in the field.

He opens by examining the complex process of transmission of the old faith to the new world and explaining the complex religious mosaic that is the hallmark of Christianity in America. He argues that environmental features contributing to this are: space, race and ethnicity, pluralism, and the relative absence of confessional conservatism. He then divides American church history into six periods: colonisation (1492-1730), the churches become American (1730-1830), the high tide of Protestantism (1830-1865), a new Christian pluralism (1865-1906), divisions, renewal, fragmentation, acculturation (1906-1960), and the recent past (1960-2000). Thematic chapters interspersed in the narrative deal with the separation of church and state, trends in theology, Canada and Mexico in the shadow of the United States, the fate of two European traditions—Lutherans and Roman Catholics, and everyday Christian spirituality and the Bible, while placed in appendices are a list of the largest denominations in the United States and Canada, an analysis of survey data on regional variations in denominational adherence, and a chronology of noteworthy events in American church history.

A short review precludes an in-depth discussion of the many themes that pervade the book. Particularly

helpful are his sections on the influence of Pietism in America, revivalism (both 18th and 19th century), the role of religion in slavery and the Civil War, the African American (black) churches, the emergence of Roman Catholicism, the growth of Pentecostal and charismatic churches, the distinctive features of Canadian Christianity, the Americanisation of the Lutheran churches, and popular spirituality. It is a book that will undoubtedly be widely used (and rightly so), although in the next edition Noll will need to correct some tiny errors: wrong dates for the Student Volunteer Movement (131) and National Association of Evangelicals (298) and a confusion of the American Council of Christian Churches with the International Council (153).

Of course, every historian writes from a distinct point of view, and Noll's is a Presbyterian/Reformed one. Hence he affirms that the Calvinists 'effectively integrated religion and society' (46) and speaks approvingly of the Calvinist theology of Abraham Kuyper and his American disciples (248-49). This perspective is especially evident in the separation of church and state chapter. I feel he does not adequately appreciate how the policy, which provided freedom for my Baptist forebears but then was misused by the nineteenth-century Protestant establishment, evolved into something that now enables religious liberty for all Americans.

Noll's critical observation about the Supreme Court's 'incorporation' of the First Amendment's religion clauses ('Congress shall make no law

respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof') through the Fourteenth Amendment in 1940 and 1947, i.e., making them applicable to the states, overlooks the fact that the high court had acted similarly regarding the amendment's free speech clause. I also object to his citing Jefferson's words that the Constitution erected a 'wall of separation between church and state' as something said 'in a private letter'. (92) When a Library of Congress official made this contention, which was widely publicized by televangelists and other religious figures who wanted to blur the line between church and state, I joined several church-state scholars in signing a public statement condemning the action. Noll's comment that judicial opinion 'swung back slightly toward earlier American tradition' when Reagan and George Bush appointed judges who opened the way for 'a little more space for religious practices in the public square' (93) is to many of us an ominous, not a positive, development. I trust that in the next edition he will revisit this discussion. Still, Noll has provided an insightful account of American church history, one that may be read with profit.

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**First and Second Chronicles
INTERPRETATION: A Bible
Commentary for Teaching and
Preaching**

Steven S. Tuell

Louisville: John Knox Press, 2001

ISBN 0-8042-3110-9

Hb 252pp

*Reviewed by Joseph Too Shao,
Biblical Seminary of the
Philippines, Manila, Philippines*

As with any commentary, the author starts out with a section of introduction and then goes on with his commentary proper. The author briefly introduces the important issues of Chronicles in the context of Hebrew Bible, its relationship with the Deuteronomistic history as well as other related issues. At the onset, he accepts the view that the Chronicler followed a Palestinian text type as his source to explain the differences between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles. The text type, differing from the Masoretic text of Samuel-Kings, is really well accepted by majority scholars today. With the discovery of Qumran texts, the older perspective that the Chronicler may have selectively 'corrected' the text can now be properly put to rest. So in his commentary proper, he neither appeals to the exegetical techniques of the Chronicler (Willi), nor tendentious methodology of the Chronicler in reflecting his own historical situation (Mosis). Thus, for Tuell, the Deuteronomist and the Chronicler both accurately portray the accounts. The author also points out

that throughout the Chronicles, there is a pattern recording the sources allegedly used for that king's history, though with few exceptions. The stated sources are to stress the importance of God's prophetic word.

Tuell adopts the view that 'the Chronicler assumes the reader is familiar with that earlier history' (p. 5). In the commentary he is able to illustrate and explain this idea through the court accounts of David and Solomon, and all the other kings of Judah. Hence it is not a 'suppression' of information, idealizing the accounts of David and Solomon, but it should be explained as the interest of the Chronicler. He constantly refers to the Chronicler's view, a key concept in explaining the harmonizing feature in the Chronicler's use of Scripture (pp. 24, 27, 30, 36, 41, 80, 136). The 'Chronicler's approach is not analytical, but synthetic, both/and rather than either/or' (p. 41). The Chronicler retells Israel's story with a purpose (pp. 65, 207). The Chronicler focuses on Scripture, and gauges faithfulness of any king with the word of the Lord (pp. 45, 47).

The author presents his commentary quite well. The reader can easily identify his emphasis on several theological themes of Chronicles, such as (1) faithfulness to the Lord (p. 41); (2) God's faithfulness (p. 66); (3) war or disaster as a sign of God's wrath (pp. 91, 195); (4) 'seeking the Lord' as the golden theme (pp. 169, 202); (5) 'God of the ancestors' (pp. 33, 171). In many parts of the commentary, the author links portions of the

Chronicles with the New Testament scriptures. Moreover, for the community of faith, he rightly identifies some texts with many classic hymns (pp. 68, 75, 111, 171, 174).

The reader would be better served if the commentary included some indexes. In particular, there ought to be a subject index, identifying some of the important themes of his commentary and other important key phrases that can be studied. Since one of the highlights of his commentary is the citing of many NT texts (which may interest many readers, and pastors), scripture index should be included too.

This is a well-written commentary, fulfilling its desire for those who teach, preach, and study the Bible in the community of faith. Since the author has had many opportunities to preach or teach in the churches, the commentary is all the more applicable. The author not only interacts with important works of this period, but cites many contemporary works as well. If the reader would like to read a commentary that is applicable for teaching and preaching, this book is a must. With his comments on the relevance of 'the word of the Lord' as refers to prophetic revelation and to the word of Scripture in the book of Chronicles, illustrated throughout the commentary, this book will allow the reader to come closer to the Almighty who reveals his word, and sends out his word through his prophets and servants.

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**Overcoming the World
Missions Crisis: Thinking
Strategically to Reach the
World**

Russell L. Penney, general editor.
Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel
Publications, 2001.
ISBN 0-8254-3466-1
389 pp Pb. No index.

*Reviewed by Robert J. Vajko,
Adelaide, Australia.*

In this book, nine authors have written sixteen chapters dealing with three major themes: 1) the present crisis in mission, 2) the relationship between theology and missiology, and 3) practical aspects of the missionary task. The editor, Russell Penney, has contributed the most with seven articles under his name.

In the Introduction, Penney sets the tone of this book stating: 'As we enter a new millennium, our starting point in doing the Lord's work must—*must*—be a belief in the Bible as the inerrant and fully inspired Word of God.' (p. 13) Then Penney continues by expressing his concern that the present crisis in missions comes from 'the cultural relativism of the age' where there are 'churches full of people who are unwilling to stand for anything at all' (p. 15).

Part 1 of the book, three chapters, deals with the origins of the present crisis. The first chapter states that this crisis comes from a number of contemporary trends: a doctrinal shift, a compromise in the name of unity and a denial of the objectivity of truth. The second chapter explains

that this crisis also comes from the moving to a position where Scripture does not dictate the theology and strategy of missions. The third chapter deals with the relationship between systematic theology and missions, explaining four basic principles of theology that must not be violated as we do mission.

This book states its concern about the influence that certain theological positions (ultra-calvinism, inclusivism, annihilationism, relativism, demonism, feminism, and pragmatism) have on the motivation for and the practice of missions. Each one of these is dealt with in the eight articles in Part 2: 'Key Theological Concerns: Enduring and Contemporary.' We will have to limit ourselves to the most important chapters.

In chapter four, 'The Mission of the Church,' Penny, quoting John Piper, explains that the glory of God is the ultimate purpose of missions. Then he states that the doctrines of depravity and the holiness of God are the key to understanding the need for missions. He then points out that the Great Commission is the charter of the church. Penney has done his homework in Greek explaining that many Greek specialists believe the first participle of the Great Commission 'is a rare case of the use of a participle to issue a command' (p. 65). This is over against the idea that this participle should be translated 'as you go' so that the church forgets that it is 'an aggressive, outgoing organism that perceived as its goal the proclamation of the gospel to the uttermost part of the earth' (Acts 1:8) (p. 65).

In chapter five of this section, Michael Pocock presents what is rare in discussions of resistance and receptivity of peoples—a balancing of the human factors in receptivity with the theological factors that cause resistance or receptivity. Perhaps more needed to be said about how culture and sovereignty relate, but it is refreshing to see theology determining practice rather than the contrary.

Chapter seven, 'The Challenge of Religious Pluralism,' is in this reviewer's opinion an extremely well developed succinct study of pluralism. It is also very gracious—something that can be lacking when one deals with this subject. He also offers a biblical remedy to creeping pluralism stating: 'A long-range plan of teaching can be developed that addresses pluralism in the context of *the Bible's story line*' [emphasis mine] (p. 138). This reviewer believes that this full context of Scripture does more to undermine pluralism and inclusivism than proof-texting. When believers see the great Old Testament theme of 'no other gods can save' related to the exclusivity of Yahweh and then move into the New Testament, biblical exclusivism is less problematic.

Chapter Eight, 'The Challenge of Postmodernism,' by Chuck Sutton is a challenge to superficial thinking. Evidential apologists would agree whole-heartedly with this chapter but presuppositionalists (à la Van Til) would no doubt be fearful that he is giving reason an unjustified autonomy. Other theologians and scholars (I think here of Old Testament scholar Walter Kaiser) would be con-

cerned about the author's approval of a *sensus plenior* approach to Scripture (p. 150). Also there probably needs to be more said about some of the positive aspects of post-modernism.

Chapter nine, 'The Necessity of Theological Training for the Missionary,' by Ron Blue presents one of the great needs in missions today—missionaries who can think and reflect theologically. Blue adds an intelligent plea and practical suggestions for greater development of theological training among nationals.

Part Three deals with practical matters in missions and discusses finances, the role and relationship of

the sending church and mission society, and closes with a chapter of short-term missions. The chapter on 'Short-Term Missions' in this section is one of the most balanced short articles this reviewer has read.

Overall, this book has much to offer. This would be a good text to interact with for a course on contemporary issues in missions. Weaknesses come from its being written by nine different authors leading to a certain theological inconsistency. Theologians and missiologists criticized for their laxity in theology in one part of the book are quoted as authorities in other parts of the book.

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Rob Merchant is curate of St John's, Harborne, in Birmingham, and is currently carrying out part-time PhD research into the interaction of religion and health in the life of older people.

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EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

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Editors: Craig Bartholomew, Jonathan Chaplin, Karl Möller,
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