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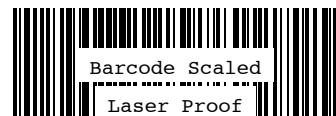
*Articles and book reviews reflecting
global evangelical theology for the purpose
of discerning the obedience of faith*



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EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

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David Parker

Committee

The Executive Committee of the WEA Theological Commission
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Editorial—Theology, Society and Culture

IN this issue we continue our 30th anniversary features with the second part of a short history of the WEA Theological Commission, covering the period 1986 to 1994, and two articles by former leaders. The first is by Archbishop David Gitari, the third chairman of the TC (1980 to 1986) and an outstanding leader of the Anglican Church in Kenya. This article outlines the theological basis for his extensive involvement in political and social processes in his own country. The other is by Dr Chris Sugden who convened the TC Ethics and Society Unit from 1986 to 1992. It explains how ideas on mission-oriented theological reflection and training forged during the period of his involvement with TC (covered by our historical article) have been developed with a commitment to retaining a contextual basis that is academically sound, faithful to the gospel and a dynamic force for service in the life of the church around the world.

This theme of mission and theology is continued in other articles. For example, John P. Davis, with an eye on postmodern society, discusses the relationship of theology, culture, and ministry to the mission of the church which he sees as the 'creation of new

communities that worship Jesus Christ as Lord'. Then, with a background of years of life and service in Africa, Dr Thomas Kopp gives a practical example of some of the issues facing this process in one geographical context by examining the 'decolonizing of the mind' in the change from mission to church. Finally, Kevin Giles reflects on a theological topic which is currently enjoying a great deal of attention, the trinity, showing how some of these dynamics have applied historically and in contemporary situations, thus alerting us to the need for clear thinking. (The book reviews in this issue reflect on Giles' work and the theme of the gospel in the world which is referred to in Dr Sugden's article.)

Theology worthy of the name cannot be practised, as Davis points out, unless it is firmly rooted in Scripture, church and culture. But, as these articles show, it is not always an easy matter to disentangle ourselves from prejudices and tradition or to remain committed in the face of difficulties. Our prayer is that the work of the TC, which we are celebrating this year, will make some contribution in the future as it has in the past to discerning the obedience of faith.

David Parker, Editor

'Discerning the Obedience of Faith' A Short History of the World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission Part 2: 1986-1994

David Parker

KEYWORDS: *Publications, administration, theological education, accreditation, evangelism, ecumenism, ethics, internet, scholarships, uniqueness of Christ, environment*

New leadership—Sunand Sumithra

As Sunand Sumithra stepped into his new unexpected role as the Executive Secretary of the Theological Commission¹, he had first to set up his office. This involved moving records and documents from Holland and from New Delhi to Bangalore where he lived, first

to his home and then later to a separate office, where he had some clerical assistance, including that of his wife. There were also the formalities associated with registering the TC in India, although it was hoped that some of the financial aspects would be handled ultimately through the WEF International office which within a year moved to Singapore.

Taking over the administrative leadership of the TC after the long period of development by its founder, Bruce Nicholls, was a big task in itself, without the additional problems of merging and relocation of operations—Nicholls and Sumithra were very different personalities and had different background experiences. Furthermore, as Sumithra himself knew only too well, his strengths were in teaching and theological reflection, not administration, international travel and networking within global evangelicalism. However, his few months

1 The sources for this history are mostly the official records of the WEF/A Theological Commission. For this section, acknowledgement is made also to J. Allan, R. E. Bell, R.W. Ferris, K. Gnanakan, R. Kemp, P. Kuzmič, J.E. Langlois, J. Mudditt, C. Sugden, C. Weber, T. Zaretsky and others who have assisted in a variety of ways.

working alongside his predecessor had given him valuable insights into the work and strengthened his vision for its value and importance. So he set about his new responsibilities with determination and enthusiasm, strongly supported by his friends and colleagues in the WEF constituency, and especially the WEF International Director, David Howard who took an active personal interest in his activities. But due to many factors beyond his control, such as poor phone communication, problems of interference with mail and bouts of health problems for Sumithra and his family, it was virtually two years before the administration settled down and he felt that the work was ready to flourish.

One of his most obvious tasks was the preparation of *Evangelical Review of Theology (ERT)*, now as sole editor. He changed its format to focus on a particular theme in each quarterly issue, covering a range of topics such as the nature of the theological task, evangelicalism, contextualisation, materialism, and the mission and relevance of the church. Similarly, he was now also sole editor of *Theological News (TN)*, which needed to keep track of a wide range of developments in the third world—seminaries, accreditation, conferences, books and church movements—with both reports and editorial comment. There was also *Theological Education Today (TET)*, printed as a supplement to *TN* and containing usually just one article; it was edited for the first year by Robert Youngblood for the ICAA.

The journals were all published by Jeremy Mudditt of Paternoster Press. However, a major part of the responsibility fell to John Allan, part-time Sec-

retary of Publications for the WEF. He was appointed after the adoption of new policies for WEF publications in 1985, and was based at the Exeter office of Paternoster. He had to work within a complex framework of relationships. Furthermore, due to distance and poor communications with Bangalore, and other factors, it was always a difficult task to collect suitable material, put it into a form suitable for publishing and keep up with deadlines. He also had to deal with the steady stream of book manuscripts and other publishing projects that were coming in for the TC and other Commissions.

Other prominent TC activities during this triennium were the Scholarship Fund which assisted many faculty members, and the Biblical Library Fund, helping seminaries and colleges by providing books at much reduced prices. These also fell to Sumithra despite plans to transfer them to the ICAA.

TC and ICAA

Theological Education continued to be a vital part of the TC's interests. At the 1986 meeting, Rolf Hille of Germany, took over as convenor of the TC Theological Education Study Unit, which had previously been led by TC staff workers, commencing with Miss Patricia Harrison, and most recently by Robert Youngblood. Hille, who would later figure very prominently in the TC work, adopted a policy of close cooperation with ICAA to avoid unnecessary duplication.

The ICAA itself was now led by Robert Youngblood. In July 1986 he had concluded his part-time assign-

ment assisting in the organization of the WEF General Assembly, and moved to Sequim, Washington, USA, where he set up the ICAA office as full time General Secretary. Youngblood, who was previously dean of a community college in the United States and had served as a missionary with the Presbyterian Church of America, first joined WEF in 1979, where he worked from the Netherlands as a Project Officer and WEF representative in Europe.

During the following months, work progressed on developing ICAA's system of recognition of accreditation services, and the encouragement of accreditation work in Latin America. Papers from consultations were published,² and a consultation was held at Unter Weissach, Germany, 23-27 June, 1987, to focus on the renewal of theological education through accreditation.

But all of this positive work was overshadowed by ongoing tension over the relationship of the ICAA to the TC and, more generally, to the WEF. At its 1986 meeting, the TC had suspended ICAA's participation in the TC budget pending clarification of relationships between the two bodies. ICAA believed this issue had been resolved earlier

and therefore regarded the TC's unexpected action as a serious problem. This episode raised the question of the precise meaning of the clause in ICAA constitution stating that it 'operates with internal autonomy under the sponsorship' of the TC. It also raised wider issues of accountability in the WEF movement and its organizational framework. This resulted in a strong push over a lengthy period to make the ICAA genuinely an 'affiliate' of WEF (as WEF literature at the time officially classed it), thus making it a parallel organization to the TC.

On the other hand, some in WEF wanted to reform ICAA to limit its role to a Board of Accreditation, and to assign all other theological education functions to the TC through its Theological Education Unit. However, others, including the ICAA, said such a proposal seriously misunderstood the nature of accreditation which was not a regulatory system, but 'a true catalyst for renewal' touching all areas of theological education.³ It was also argued that this wider role for ICAA as

2 ICETE publications form a series called *Evangelical Theological Education Today*. Titles are *Evangelical Theological Education Today: An International Perspective*, Paul Bowers, ed. (1st ed. 1982; 2nd ed. 1994); *Evangelical Theological Education Today: Agenda for Renewal*, Paul Bowers, ed. (1982); *Reader in Theological Education* Robert Youngblood, ed. (1983); *TEE Come of Age*, Robert Youngblood, ed. (1986); *Excellence and Renewal in Theological Education*, Robert Youngblood, ed. (1989); *Text and Context in Theological Education*, Roger Kemp, ed. (1994).

3 Tite Tiéno, 'The Future of ICAA', *ERT* Vol 14 No 1 (Jan 1990), pp. 86-91, in which he called for the movement to 'recover and expand [its] original vision'; ICAA, 'Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education', *ERT*, Vol 8 No 1 (Apr. 1984), pp. 136-143 (later revised in 1990 and 2002); Robert W. Ferris, *Renewal in Theological Education: strategies for change* (Wheaton: Billy Graham Center, 1990); for B. J. Nicholls' views on global theological education see his 'Theological Education and Evangelization' in J. D. Douglas, (Ed.), *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland Official Reference Volume* (Minneapolis, Minn.: World Wide Publications, 1975), pp. 634-645.

a full service agency for theological education was part of the original vision when it was established in 1980. This tension over relationships between the ICAA, the TC and WEF was not fully dealt with until the end of the triennium in 1989, but at least at its next meeting in 1987, the TC Executive reversed its decision on the original 1986 motion to suspend financial support for the ICAA.

The first Executive Committee meeting in Sumithra's term was held 31 March to 2 April, 1987 at Korntal, Germany. Despite the administrative and logistical difficulties Sumithra had experienced so far, he approached this meeting positively, calling in his report for the TC (which, he reminded members, had both a servant and prophetic function), to focus more on key theological issues, better communication and to relate more closely to local church ministry. But it was still a difficult time for him as he continued to come to grips with the extent and nature of the work and his responsibilities as the Executive Secretary.

The meeting grappled with financial structures and administration which were still in a serious condition. As a result, a delegation consisting of Dr Robert Youngblood (who brought his assistant, Betty Froisland) and the WEF Administrator, Dr David Tan was sent to Bangalore in May 1987 to assist Sumithra in setting up a new organizational system for the TC office. The TC Executive Committee also dealt with membership issues and reviewed the by-laws to improve the structures and functions of the organization.

Study program advances

One of the most significant actions of this 1987 meeting was to set up a new Task Force to provide an official WEF response to the 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry' document which had been produced by the World Council of Churches in 1982. There had been discussions within WEF circles for some time about making a response in view of the fact that virtually every denomination in the world was taking up the invitation to comment officially on the paper by mid-1989. One of the problems for WEF was that, being an interdenominational body, it did not have an official ecclesiology, and therefore discussion of the topics covered by the WCC document was likely to be controversial. But finally it was decided that the issue was of such importance that the WEF should make a contribution to the debate, even though the time for the preparation of a response before the WCC deadline was now short. So a task force was set up, headed by Dr Paul Schrottenboer who had so successfully led the Task Force which reported to the 1986 General Assembly on evangelical perspectives on Roman Catholicism. His group, consisting of eight people representing seven countries, worked effectively to produce a carefully worded 8000-word statement in time for the WCC's process of review.⁴

⁴ P. G. Schrottenboer, (editor), 'An evangelical response to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry', *ERT* Vol 13 No 4 (Oct. 1989), pp. 291-313; Paul Schrottenboer (editor), *An Evangelical Response to 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry'* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992).

The most important of all TC activities continued to be the Study Units and Task Forces. There had been seven of these in the previous period, all of which were retained in 1986, with a new one added. Perhaps the most effective was Faith and Church,⁵ led by Dr Donald Carson, which continued its productive activities with a consultation on prayer at Cambridge, UK, 6-10 November 1986, involving twenty-five participants from fifteen countries. Its papers were published in 1990 under the title, *Teach us to Pray*, the third in the series from this unit. Two years later, November 3-6, 1988, it met again in Cambridge with twenty theologians discussing papers on the theme of justification. The papers appeared in 1992 as *Right with God: Justification in the Bible and the World*.

Bishop Michael Nazir Ali of Pakistan was appointed in 1986 as the leader of the Ecumenical Issues unit, but due to his removal to UK soon after, there had been no activity. This area of work was subsequently included in Dr Paul Schrottenboer's task force preparing the response to the WCC book.

Patrick Sookhdeo, who led Theology of Evangelisation prior to 1986, had some projects on Islam to complete so it was more than a year before the new leader, Dr Ken Gnanakan of India, took over. Gnanakan had been appointed to the TC in 1983. An evan-

gelist in his own right, he was also well known for his pioneering work in establishing in Bangalore a training institution on holistic principles known as The ACTS Institute, and for his involvement in ATA.⁶ He conducted workshops for the Theology of Evangelization Unit in UK, USA, Japan and India during subsequent years, focusing on the issues of secularism and other ideologies related to the West and world religions.⁷ Gnanakan retained his connection with the TC over many years and eventually became Vice-Chairman.

As the result of the response to Rene Padilla's paper at the Singapore consultation on the new ecclesiology in Latin America, an additional Study Unit was named to focus on 'New and Emerging models of the church'. In response to a request for ideas, Guillermo Cook of Costa Rica had submitted the names of several who were interested in the topic with himself as convenor, but the details were not recorded in the original minutes. However, he had proceeded to develop plans for the group to work on the topic at a consultation in June 1988. But

⁵ D. A. Carson, (editor) *Teach us to Pray: Prayer in the Bible and the World* (Exeter/Grand Rapids: Paternoster/Baker, 1990); *Right with God: Justification in the Bible and the World* (Carlisle/Grand Rapids: Paternoster/Baker, 1992).

⁶ See the Festschrift in honour of Dr K. Gnanakan's retirement, B. Wintle, et al (eds.), *Work, Worship and Witness* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 2003), which includes a bibliography and brief biography. See also W. Harold Fuller, *People of the Mandate* (Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Baker/Paternoster, 1996) pp. 118-121.

⁷ See *TN* Vol 22 No 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1991) for a report on the US session, held Sept. 1991, and also, Ken Gnanakan, *The Pluralistic Predicament* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1992), pp. 223-225, notes 1-3.

when he sought funding, his application was disallowed on the grounds that official sanction had not been obtained previously; however, finances were offered after the event which took place under other auspices.

There was a change in the leadership of the Ethics and Society Study Unit—Dr Ronald Sider's term had expired and he was replaced by Rev. Dr Chris Sugden. While working in India in relief and development work, Sugden had been a partner of Unit member, Rev. Vinay Samuel; he had also been involved in the 1980 Hoddesdon, 1982 CRESR and Wheaton 1983 consultations in this field. He had published some of his own studies⁸ and soon became a close partner with Sider in the Ethics and Society Unit.

The Unit continued its record of energetic activity, having met in Kenya in August 1987 and added a new member, Dr Bong Ho Son, who was the founder of the Christian Ethical Practice Movement in his native Korea—he would later become convenor of the Unit. The Unit co-sponsored a consultation on evangelical social activists and charismatics at Pasadena, California, 12-15 January, 1988 where the coordinators were Ronald Sider and Michael Harper.⁹ Seminars were held in Korea and the papers from the 1983 Wheaton consultation on the church in response to human need were pub-

lished.¹⁰ The Unit continued to publish its journal *Transformation* until mid-1988.

In 17-21 October 1988 in Hong Kong, the Church and State in Asia Consultation, which became part of the Ethics and Society Unit, was organized by Dr. Jonathan Chao of the China Church Research Centre (now China Ministries International) in Hong Kong in conjunction with Partnership in Mission.

However, the Ethics and Society unit was also the centre of concern over their plans for a visit to South Africa. At the 1986 TC meeting, attention had been drawn to the serious situation of evangelicals in South Africa. Accordingly, members of the Ethics and Society Unit had discussed the possibility of a fact-finding visit there to alert the wider evangelical community to the situation and to provide some encouragement to those in South Africa who had been severely affected by media and communications restrictions imposed by the apartheid regime. Although the Unit had believed their plans had been arranged properly in

8 *Social Gospel or No Gospel* (Bramcote: Grove Books, 1975); *A Different Dream—Non-Violence as Practical Politics* (Bramcote: Grove Books, 1976); *Radical Discipleship* (Basingstoke: Marshalls, 1981).

9 *Transformation* Vol 5 No 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1988).

10 Vinay Samuel and Christopher Sugden (editors), *The Church in Response to Human Need* (Grand Rapids/Oxford; Eerdmans/Regnum Books, 1987). (Previously published as *Selected papers from Wheaton '83, a conference convened by the World Evangelical Fellowship at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Ill., from June 20 to July 1, 1983* (Monrovia, Calif.: MARC, 1983). Arrangements were also made for a Spanish translation. Bruce Nicholls' book on the 1983 Wheaton consultation dealing with the nature and mission of the church had been published earlier under the title, *The Church—God's Agent for Change* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986)

cooperation with the TC leadership, the report of these developments to the 1987 Executive Committee meeting resulted in serious misunderstandings. It was a sensitive issue for the WEF leadership which interpreted the efforts of the Study Unit as conflicting with WEF processes and related activities. The visit ultimately took place in April 1989 under the auspices of INFEMIT,¹¹ although the team included some people from the WEF constituency.¹²

Consultations and contacts

The TC was also involved in two important consultations during this period. The first was on conversion which, in continuity with a number of similar efforts previously,¹³ was arranged in cooperation with the LCWE Theology Working Group. It attracted about thirty participants from 14 countries, and was held in Hong Kong 4-8 Jan. 1988. This consultation was regarded by all concerned as a valuable and highly successful event, and produced a nine-page statement, *The Hong Kong call to conversion*.¹⁴ The papers were not published, but the main points of the consultation were summarised in *Turning to God: Biblical conversion in the modern world*, edited by David Wells,

who had done a similar job for the previous consultation on the Holy Spirit and Evangelisation.¹⁵

Wider contacts were also involved in the second consultation held 26-29 April 1989 in Willowbank, Bermuda on the Gospel and Jewish people. It was sponsored by the WEF with the unofficial support of LCWE, and chaired by Vernon Grounds of Denver Seminary. The participants included a number of well known theologians and Christian agency heads, including representatives of the WEF and its TC.¹⁶ This consultation arose in response to strong trends in some Jewish and Christian circles towards a view based on the idea of the two covenants—one for Christians and the other for the Jews—that rendered evangelism of the Jews unnecessary and illegitimate. One major denomination was already moving officially towards that view. As a result of the discussions and the skilled work of James I. Packer and Kenneth Kantzer, a 2500 word declaration was adopted and quickly released to the media in time to influence Christian opinion on the matter. This consultation had another outcome—conversations which took place at that time between the TC Executive Secretary and Tuvya Zaret-sky, of the Jews for Jesus movement in

11 The International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians (INFEMIT), formed in 1987.

12 See report of the visit in *Transformation* Vol 6 No 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1989), pp. 19-23

13 They included Gospel and culture 1977; Simple lifestyle, 1980; Nature and mission of the Church, 1983; and Holy Spirit and evangelization, 1985.

14 *ERT* Vol 16 No 3 (Jul. 1992), pp. 262-270

15 David F. Wells, *Turning to God: Biblical conversion in the modern world* (Exeter/Grand Rapids; Paternoster/Baker, 1989). David F. Wells, *God the evangelist: how the Holy Spirit works to bring men and women to faith* (Grand Rapids/Exeter: Eerdmans/Paternoster Press, 1987).

16 They included T. Adeyemo, H. Blocher, Bong Ro, and S. Sumithra.

USA, created the idea of a TC Study Unit on the topic. These ideas were developed and came to fruition at the 1990 TC Executive meeting.

Sumithra travelled extensively as part of his work as TC Executive Secretary. As well as many visits around India, he was in Europe in August 1986 for the FEET conference and then in Singapore to plan for the consultation on conversion. He was back in England in November 1986 to participate in the Faith and Church session at Cambridge. The next year, he was in Singapore again for an ATA conference, but plans for a visit to Australia and New Zealand earlier that year failed due to visa problems. He had in mind visits in the future to other countries as well.

Early in 1988 he travelled to USA for the ICAA Executive Committee meetings, joining Dr Rolf Hille in his position as convenor of the Theological Education Study Unit in planning joint activities and in particular, seeking to develop better relations between the two bodies. As well as making good progress in developing ideas for a joint consultation on the theme, 'Renewal and Excellence in Evangelical Theological Education through Biblical Contextualization', the meeting adopted several strong resolutions about the need for reform of the WEF structures as they impacted on the ICAA.

Sumithra took the opportunity while in USA to promote the work of TC. He was not able to visit seminaries as he intended because the WEF North American office did not have adequate contacts in this area, but he did make contact with many WEF donors. He was more successful with theological colleges in the UK leg of this tour, which also included a visit to Pater-

noster Publications for a rare opportunity of face to face consultation about the publications.

He considered these international travels a vital part of his contribution to the core work of TC—theological reflection and networking; he supplemented these efforts by writing, lecturing and conference participation in various settings. As he reported to the 1988 Executive Commission, this was all giving him a wider and more substantial vision for the Commission: '... more than ever before, I am convinced of the crucial role our Commission has to play in the defence of the Gospel'.

Vision fades

The 1988 Executive Committee meeting was held March 15-18, 1988 in Bangalore—the first time it had been held in the home city of the TC, although three of the members were not able to attend. Sumithra was able to report positively about the process of reorganization and financial administration, feeling that the worst was behind them. Steps were under way for smoother operation of the Study Units, and the streamlining of administration, by-laws and budgeting. He had made many contacts in his travels and had a better understanding of the global context.

So he was looking forward to the next year or so leading up to general meeting and consultation due at the end of the triennium in 1989. He had gathered many suggestions for topics for theological reflection including the need for pastoral care in relation to family relationships. He was also concerned about 'the need for real theological discernment against the grow-

ing influence of various kinds of false teachings'—a topic which would be treated in detail at the next consultation. However, he regretted that the papers from the 1986 consultation on 'Christ the Liberator and Redeemer' had not been published. (In fact, they never were.)

The relationship between the TC and ICAA was again on the agenda, with Dr Robert Youngblood in attendance to present his case. Dr Rolf Hille, as convener of the TC Theological Education unit, also reported. The work of the ICAA was commended, but the TC Executive declined to accept the idea of the ICAA as an autonomous, parallel (or 'affiliate') organization, at least until it could be discussed more fully the following year. However, in a decision that resulted in virtually the same outcome, it was agreed that the work of the TC Study Unit on Theological Education should be related closely to the ICAA and that the two bodies should hold a joint international consultation in 1989 (possibly in Yugoslavia). Soon after, the WEF leadership confirmed that the description of the ICAA's status as 'affiliate' had been an administrative oversight and that the ICAA General Secretary should continue to report through the TC Executive Secretary to the WEF.

The publication and administration of *Transformation* by the Ethics and Society Unit was also a matter of discussion at Bangalore. At its meeting held soon after, the WEF Executive voted to carry through on its earlier decision that *Transformation* should not appear under the auspices of the WEF. The WEF's audit problems were now stated as an extra reason for this decision. So from mid-1988, *Transfor-*

mation passed out of TC hands.

At end of the 1988 Executive meeting, the pathway for the future was taking clearer shape—the scene was set for better relationships with the membership and for a more clearly defined Study Unit process and program. Furthermore, uncertainties concerning the Ethics and Society Unit's proposed visit to South Africa were aired and it was endorsed as a low key personal tour for information purposes.

The by-laws were updated and some of the growing administrative problems addressed, but issues related to finances, budgeting and fund raising were still major (and escalating) causes of concern. Some of these were attributable to lack of training, and poor staffing, facilities and communication on the part of the TC, but there were also implications for the overall WEF administration. Although he was aware of these and other difficulties, Sumithra himself relished his experience with the TC, stating that 'my horizons in theological discernment as well as Christian spirituality have been much extended due to my one and half years in this office ... for which I am sincerely grateful to God'.

However, this impetus was short lived, and in a rapid turn of events, the prospects for both the TC and ICAA were soon under a cloud. First of all, in September 1988, Robert Youngblood resigned from the ICAA, one year short of his term, in difficult circumstances at the end of a long period of personal and organizational tension over his role and the status of the ICAA. This meant that the ICAA had to scale back on its joint-consultation plans for June 1989. Even though much planning had been done, it declared that with

reduced staffing, it could stage only a limited mini-consultation, restricted to its own members and those of the TC Executive and Theological Education study unit. The involvement of both the TC and ICAA and many from their constituency in the important Lausanne II consultation in Manila about the same time added pressure for this decision.

In the circumstances, the TC decided to delay its consultation and general meeting by one year. However, it was agreed that the Executive Committees of both the organizations would still meet in June 1989 and that there would also be some joint sessions to resolve the problem of their mutual relationships.

Then, when the TC Executive itself met in June 1989, it was presented with the resignation of Dr Sunand Sumithra, even though only a year or so earlier he had spoken positively about his vision for the TC, his personal commitment and how 'the work of the Commission is becoming more exciting to me as the days go by'. Early in 1989, he had presented a detailed and positive report covering the activities of the TC Study Units, and his travel, involvement in conferences, writing and teaching, and ministry and organizational plans for the future. He had been particularly stirred by a conference of evangelicals and ecumenicals on mission, sponsored by the ELCW in Stuttgart, Germany that he and other WEF and LCWE people had attended. Discussions there highlighted the great importance of the theological grounding of the church; he came away 'convinced ... that WEF, through its Theological Commission at least, has a vital and unique role in keeping the purity of the gospel in this age of growing secu-

larism and pluralism'.

He was conscious of his struggles with the administrative side of the work, but in the light of his convictions about the value and importance of the TC, hoped that some solution could be found for this problem, such as reducing the complexity of his role by dividing the theological work from the educational, or securing administrative assistance for him. However, the Executive accepted the resignation, effective September 30, 'with profound regret, recognising his gifts in the areas of teaching and writing, in gratitude to God and deep appreciation of his Christian maturity in all his dealings, and urging him to maintain the closest tie possible with the Theological Commission in the future'.¹⁷

Although when first appointed, he had not expected to be handed the full work of the Executive Secretary on his own, he was deeply committed and had made a determined effort to carry out the work to the best of his ability. Considerable physical and logistical limitations of the Bangalore base made his task extremely difficult, and his period in office had been a time of great pressure within the TC because of factors outside his control. He had made a worthwhile contribution on the theological level with his writings, editing and lecturing; even after the conclusion of his duties, he completed editing a *Festschrift* in honour of his mentor

¹⁷ Dr Sumithra soon found an academic post with post-graduate and research centre, The South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS) in Bangalore, and later engaged in significant research and writing ministries.

and predecessor, Dr Bruce Nicholls.¹⁸ However, in the latter part of his period of office the pace of TC work had slackened considerably and its administration was in a poor state, leaving the TC Executive Committee and the WEF leadership with the urgent task of making arrangements for a successor to restore it.

Despite these issues, the ICAA mini-consultation focusing on 'Perspectives on the Future' was held in 14-17 June 1989 at Wheaton College, Illinois. During the sessions, Dr Roger Kemp of Australia, a former missionary working in theological education in Africa, was installed as the new part-time General Secretary of the ICAA.

The executives of the TC and the ICAA agreed on a policy of mutual communication and cooperation, which included sharing in membership of each other's executives. This made them virtually parallel organizations, which is what the ICAA had requested all along. Furthermore, as the convenor of the TC Unit on Theological Education pointed out, this policy meant that his Unit could be dissolved or incorporated into the ICAA. It was decided also that the joint TC/ICAA consultation planned for 1989 on the theme, *From Text to Context*, would be deferred to 1991.

Bong Ro called in

The major issue for the members of TC

Executive and the WEF leadership at these meetings was to fill the vacancy left by the resignation of Dr Sunand Sumithra. They appointed ATA General Secretary, Dr Bong Ro, currently on furlough in USA, as interim Executive Secretary on a part-time basis. He would be assisted in some of his work by Dr Paul Schrottenboer.

Ro, a Korean who studied in USA at Wheaton College, Covenant Seminary and Concordia Lutheran Seminary, originally began working with OMF at the Discipleship Training Centre, Singapore in 1970. In 1974, he became Executive Secretary of the Asia Theological Association, with his office in Taiwan, where he became extremely well known for his energetic leadership of ATA. He had therefore been intimately associated with the foundations of TC as it emerged from the 'Theological Assistance Program' and had worked extensively with Dr Bruce Nicholls, who endorsed his new appointment. Ro was strongly supported by the WEF International Director, Dr David Howard, who continued to take an active part in guiding the TC; Howard and other TC leaders hoped that Ro would take on the position permanently. He was interested in this possibility, but realized he could do so only if there was someone to replace him in the ATA post; he had also another major responsibility—Dean of the ATA's Asia Graduate School of Theology.

Bong Ro began work by reviewing the Study Units with a view to reviving and expanding them. One immediate issue to deal with was the resignation of Donald A. Carson who had served a lengthy term on the Executive and especially in leading the Faith and

¹⁸ *Doing Theology in Context: a Festschrift in honour of Dr Bruce J. Nicholls*, edited by Sunand Sumithra (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1992); an earlier plan for this to be a TC publication did not materialise.

Church unit. He stood down from the Executive in 1990, but wanted to continue with the Study Unit until the series of five books was complete.

Ro needed no persuading that publications were a critical part of the TC program. He was also aware that success would continue to depend on the dedicated and sacrificial contribution of Jeremy Mudditt and his family firm, Paternoster Press—especially during this transitional period when the practical aspects of their production were extremely difficult to manage. There was increased pressure from mid-1990 when John Allan ceased his role as WEF Publications Secretary, and was no longer able to bolster *ERT* and *TN* as he done before. To deal with this problem, Dr Bruce Nicholls was called on once again; he took over in January 1991 with a welcome improvement in quality. On the other hand, Bong Ro planned to handle the editing, production and distribution of *Theological News* himself, changing it into a glossy magazine with many photographs—a style which he had used so successfully over many years for the ATA newsletter. However, it took some time to achieve this. After an embarrassing break of one full year when the newsletter was not published, the first of the new style issues finally appeared in mid-1990

However, the biggest and most urgent task for Ro was to organize the next TC consultation, postponed from 1989 and now set down for mid-1990—just a year away. He was well experienced at this type of work and by early in 1990 had confirmed eight paper writers, with plans for others well advanced.

‘Theological Issues of the 90s’

The Consultation was held at Wheaton College 18-22 June 1990 with about 80 people from 21 countries in attendance. The theme, ‘Theological Issues of the 90s’, echoed concerns expressed earlier by Dr Sunand Sumithra about the threat posed by the growth of unorthodox theologies and religious movements. Major papers were delivered by theologians from US, Netherlands, India, Germany, Philippines, Romania, Yugoslavia on such topics as the ‘New Age’ movement, Process Theology, the ‘Minjung’ theology of Korea, resurrection and religious pluralism, Suffering and Martyrdom, sacrifice and blood in African Theology, the person and work of Christ in Latin America. Reports were given on current developments in theological education in Europe, Africa, the South Pacific, Asia and North America.

The triennial TC general meeting was also scheduled to be held during the Consultation program, but recent changes in the leadership and the associated interruptions to activity impacted this important event. With only sixteen members out of the total number of 42 present, a postal vote was needed to ratify the business conducted. Due to unsettlement in the latter part of the triennium, it was decided that the membership of those appointed in 1986 would be extended to the next meeting planned for 1992.

Executive Committee business could not be completed either due to lack of a quorum. Ward Gasque of Canada and Pedro Arana were nominated as members to replace D.A. Carson and E. Nunez; Bishop Nazir Ali had also indicated his wish to retire. Most important

of all, the ATA agreed to release Ro from his position as General Secretary, so the WEF appointed him permanently as TC Executive Secretary, but on a part time basis until a replacement was found for him at the ATA.

Study Units, Electronic Networking and Scholarships

Despite the slow down in TC work during the previous period, the Study Unit convenors gave reports on up to twelve areas that indicated considerable activity—both past and anticipated. In fact, the need was expressed for a manual of procedures so that the many different streams and initiatives could be handled effectively.

Ethics and Society Unit members had been in Korea for lectures, conferences and as WEF observers at the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Conference (March 1990). The conference of charismatic and evangelical social activists in Pasadena January 1988 was followed up in London two years later, giving birth to the Spirit and Kingdom dialogue. A process of studying Christian faith and economics had been established in 1987 and 1990 in Oxford and the attention of the unit would now be given to business ethics, the environment, and issues relative to Eastern Europe.¹⁹

The Ecumenical Issues Unit, led by Dr. Paul Schrotenboer, which had successfully completed two projects during the last decade, was now starting work on the third, an evangelical response to the recent WCC report,

‘Toward a Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith’. The report needed to be finalised in 1992 if it was to be included in the WCC review process. In addition, there had been brief private discussions in 1988 in Jerusalem between the International Director Dr David Howard and Dr Schrotenboer for WEF and Roman Catholic representatives about the evangelical statement on the Catholic Church which had been produced in 1986. It was decided that further discussion was needed to understand the issues more satisfactorily. These were set for October 1990 in Budapest, involving Dr Schrotenboer (USA) and Dr George Vandervelde (Canada) for the WEF and two representatives of the Vatican. These talks identified some of the key issues, which indicated clearly the need for more extensive study still.

Dr. Ken Gnanakan of India, convener of the Theology of Evangelization Unit, reported that a 150 page document had been drafted to encapsulate the findings of its earlier workshops.²⁰ Two new Task Forces were also set up within this Unit to cover important areas of evangelization—New Age Theology, with Dr. Gordon Lewis (Denver Seminary), as convener, and Evangelization of the Jews, a group led by Rev. Tuvia Zaretsky, of Jews for Jesus, which had its origin at the Willowbank conference held in Bermuda 26-29 April 1989 on the Gospel and Jewish people. Zaretsky’s organization had made a formal proposal for the Task Force and guaranteed support for its

¹⁹ *Transformation* Vol 5 No 4 (Oct-Dec 1988); Vol 7 No 3 (July 1990); Vol 4 No 3 (July 1987); Vol 7 No 2 (Apr 1990)

²⁰ This manuscript was never published, due to difficulties with the WEF publications process.

work. The final papers would be presented by May 1991.

During the consultation in Wheaton, the participants endorsed the establishment of some additional study projects. A task force on Eastern Europe Needs and Issues would also be established under the leadership of Dr Peter Kuzmič to identify critical theological issues related to new opportunities opening up in Eastern Europe. Similarly, the new world situation called for more attention to be given to non-Christian religions, so initial plans were made for a task force on this topic as well.

Dr Peter Lewis (UK) was requested to develop an international initiative on preaching as a result of a report from the Study Unit on Pastoral Ministries. However, there was misunderstanding about the prospects of another proposal — pastoral counselling because the Director of the Pastoral Counselling Institute had been led to understand his organization could act alone under the TC auspices rather than being part of a more comprehensive Task Force.

A sign of future trends was also discussed at the Wheaton meetings, when Dr David McKenna, President of Asbury Seminary, with the strong recommendation of Dr David Howard, presented ideas for an electronic network of theologians and seminaries, under the control of the TC and acting as 'an extended Publications Committee'. No action was taken at the meeting, but the idea was promoted on several occasions in later years, especially under the leadership of Dr John Bennett of OC who was coordinator of a working group on the project. Well before the time of Bennett's premature death in

1999, the TC had found its electronic home as part of the WEF's website, and the ideas proposed by Dr McKenna were overtaken by the ready availability of email and e-conferencing.

During the year 1989-90, the Scholarship Fund distributed \$38,000 to 17 students. At the 1990 meeting, \$50,000 was allocated to six Africans and eight Asians, and \$30,000 was allocated to Asia Graduate School of Theology and Eastern Europe colleges for scholarship aid. However, signs of change were noticeable when, in response to an approach from the Langham Trust, there was active discussion about cooperation between the two bodies. There was also some discussion of Library Fund matters, but soon after this work was handed to the ICAA.

Plans were also laid for a full scale consultation in conjunction with the WEF General Assembly scheduled for 1992. There had been protracted discussions with the LCWE Theology Working Group to hold a joint consultation, but it had not been possible to reach agreement, so the TC decided to go ahead alone with a consultation on the Uniqueness of Christ and religious pluralism.

Korean base for TC

Now in his permanent role as Executive Director, Bong Ro concluded his furlough and returned to his homeland of Korea in August 1990, setting up the TC office in ACTS seminary. He had already relocated his ATA office to Seoul in May 1990. He would continue to have joint responsibilities for the TC and ATA until February 1991 when the ATA appointed Dr Ken Gnanakan

(India) as General Secretary and Rodrigo Tano (Philippines) as Accreditation Secretary. Ro thus concluded twenty years with the ATA, but retained the position of Dean of AGST.

Ro, assisted strongly by his wife Alma, took up his work with characteristic enthusiasm. As he noted, the challenge he faced was to think globally—not just about Asia. It was a new situation for him and also for the evangelical constituency because he had been so much associated with his famous slogan, ‘Train Asians in Asia’. As one who had been immersed in theological education and publications for so long, Ro would also need to expand his thinking about the role of the TC as encompassing more than these functions. However, his efforts at restoring the thrust of the TC were hampered for months by difficulties in setting up his office and securing clerical and other staff to assist him; it was also interrupted by frequent travels and by his other responsibilities.

The early 1990s proved to be one of the most active periods for TC work for years, although political and military events in the Balkans were beginning to impact on Executive Committee chairman, Dr Peter Kuzmič, whose seminary had to be relocated in September 1991 due to the war.

The Fire

At the same time as Ro was re-establishing himself in Korea, another event happened far away which would have a continuing impact on the TC and WEF generally. A fire in the new warehouse of Paternoster Publishers on the night of 15-16 August, 1990 destroyed a huge quantity of material, which

included the entire stock of WEF publications, not least of which was *ERT* and all the TC books and monographs. The value of WEF material was over \$50,000, although that was only a fraction of the total lost by STL, the subsidiary of OM which had moved into the warehouse less than a year earlier and used it as a base for its extensive distribution network for several major UK publishers, including Paternoster. The only surviving WEF materials were those held by Baker Book House in USA, who had begun distributing new WEF books in 1987. Half of the US stock would be shifted back to UK, but it was a major setback, although it did provide an opportunity for the reassessment of WEF publications.

Study Units at work

Recognizing the importance of the Study Unit program of the TC, Ro gave this work a high priority. Faith and Church held its fifth consultation in Tyndale House, Cambridge, UK, 18-20 October 1990 to finalise its series of books; this one focused on the topic of worship.²¹ The previous book on justification was about to be printed, but stocks of the first three had been destroyed in the fire. Dr J. I. Packer (Regent College, Vancouver) had been approached as convener to replace D. A. Carson, and had given his informal agreement. But he withdrew in October 1991 before any more projects had been undertaken. This marked the end of a long period of effective work by this study unit.

²¹ D. A. Carson (editor), *Worship: Adoration and Action* (Carlisle/Grand Rapids: Paternoster/Baker, 1993).

The newly formed Jewish Evangelism Task Force held its first session 2-5 May 1991 at Oakbrook, Illinois, with 17 participants. The Task Force commissioned 14 papers to be published under the title: 'To the Jew First: The place of Jewish evangelism in the ongoing mission of the church'. However, these publication plans never materialised,²² and the Task Force did not meet again.

The Ethics and Society Unit was working on plans for a major consultation in association the Au Sable Institute in US for 1992 focusing on the environment, and the ICAA was planning its next consultation for July 1991.

Changes and challenges

However, the strong dynamic that had energised the Ethics and Society Unit from the beginning was now beginning to be focused on other organizations. The impending retirement of Donald Carson from the Church and Faith Unit also signalled the end of a second important plank of TC work. The growing concentration of theological education interests in the ICAA and its consequent development as a viable organization operating in parallel to the TC removed yet another significant element. These three developments, coupled with pressures on the leadership, shortages of finance and uncertain relationships with the WEF, meant that the TC was facing a difficult future.

The AD 2000 movement, a third major world evangelical organization alongside the Lausanne movement and WEF, which began to take shape from the late 1980s was also destined to have an impact on the prospects for the TC and the WEF generally. A conference scheduled for 1994 involved key TC personnel in its theology track, including the TC Chairman, Peter Kuzmič and Executive Secretary, Dr Bong Ro. A report in *Theological News* indicated that Ro saw the new interest as complementary to the TC because it would work at the grass roots level of the churches rather than with theologians and seminaries, but as time passed, this distinction was not so clear.

With the massive changes taking place around this time in the communist world, Eastern Europe was becoming a focus of concern for theologians and theological educators as well as other strands of Christian work. There was even more interest for the TC because of the increasingly prominent role its chairman, Peter Kuzmič, was taking in this area of ministry which affected his homeland so intensely. WEF International Director, David Howard, TC leaders Peter Kuzmič and Bong Ro together with the head of Overseas Council, Charles Spicer, made an extensive tour of six countries in May 1990 to assess the situation, and to introduce the ministries of WEF to evangelical leaders in these countries with the possibilities of the formation of their own evangelical alliances. Ro reported on this important trip: 'With such a rapid church growth taking place in every Eastern European country except Albania, leadership training and Christian pub-

²² The papers from the Willowbank conference, 1989, were never published either.

lications are two most urgently needed ministries. The WEF Theological Commission must pick up the challenge to assist theological education in Eastern Europe.²³

On the other hand, there was an opportunity to expand TC and ICAA interests in Latin America with a visit there by ICAA General Secretary Roger Kemp in June 1990. This and later initiatives eventually led to the formation of AETAL (The Evangelical Association for Theological Education in Latin America) in July 1992 with 80 founding members covering thirteen countries in four regions, an additional regional member for ICAA.

TC goes 'Down Under'

The first meeting of the TC Executive after Bong Ro took over the full leadership was in Canberra, Australia to coincide with the 7th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 7-20 February 1991. The theme of the Assembly was of interest to many evangelicals, 'Come Holy Spirit, renew the whole creation', and several were present, some with TC connections. A statement of evangelical concerns was issued at the end of the Assembly and a separate report was presented to the WCC leadership calling for changes to give evangelicals a greater voice. The statement acknowledged that evangelicals were challenged by various themes that emerged in the Assembly, including the call to unity, the needs of indigenous and marginalised people, the role of women, issues of syncretism and for care and skill in dealing with

the complex theology of issues related to justice, peace and the integrity of creation. This was the first experience for the TC of a major world event and the ability to make informed comment, especially in the form of a publication two years later which would be a resource for interested members of the evangelical constituency.²⁴

The TC Executive meeting, held in Canberra 15-16 February 1991, just prior to the WCC Assembly, was the first (and only one so far) to be held in the southern hemisphere. It was also the first for new members Dr Ward Gasque (North America) and Rev. Pedro Arana (Peru); the vacancy caused by Bishop Nazir Ali's withdrawal was filled with an invitation to Bishop E. Gbonigi of Nigeria. While the financial situation was not serious, Tony Lee, WEF Administration Director and TC Treasurer, was present to give advice, reminding the Executive of the need to keep good control of expenditure, and to seek more funding, especially from North America.

With the next general meeting and consultation only a year away, it was decided to extend once again the term of TC members appointed in 1986—this time to 1995, and to plan for a wider representation by appointing additional people. Dr Ro was making some progress in his position, but he had been hampered by delays in relinquishing his ATA responsibilities and in the arrival of office assistance.

Dr Bruce Nicholls continued the thematic plan for *ERT* and encouraged

23 *TN* Vol 21 No3 (July 1990), pp. 2-3.

24 TC officials such as Dr B. J. Nicholls had been in attendance at earlier WCC events, including the 5th Assembly, Nairobi, 1975.

convenors of study units to contribute material. Discussion centred on ways to reduce subscription prices and to broaden the circulation base with subsidies for needy institutions, greater publicity, and cheaper printing and postal arrangements outside the UK. It was decided to continue the preparation of the monograph series, which Ro would take up with considerable enthusiasm later.

There had not been much time for more activity from the Study Units since the previous meeting, but plans for various projects were well in hand. However, concerns were expressed about the health of the convenor of Ecumenical Issues, Dr Paul Schrotenboer. The Theology of Evangelization Unit was planning to follow up its earlier workshops with a session at Fuller Seminary in September 1991, focusing on the broader framework of the Kingdom of God in the context of secularism and atheism, while another group would meet in Japan.²⁵

Dr. Peter Kuzmič gave a moving report on the urgent need to develop the Task Force on Eastern Europe and to supply teaching faculty, libraries and text books in national languages in order to respond to the new opportunities and pressures for ministry and training in the countries of Eastern Europe.

ICAA

The work of the ICAA was also an important item of business, with General Secretary, Dr Roger Kemp present throughout the meeting. There was considerable discussion once more

about relationships between the TC and ICAA. The convenor of the Theological Education Unit, Dr Rolf Hille, and Dr Bong Ro were asked to set up discussions with the ICAA with 'a view to closer identity'. Plans were endorsed for the joint consultation to be held in July 1991 at the London Bible College on the theme, 'From Text to Context in Evangelical Theological Education'. The papers from the conference, which proved to be a successful event, including several by TC personnel, such as Donald Carson, Bong Ro and Rolf Hille, were published by the ICAA in 1994.²⁶ However, it was apparent that the close connection between the TC and the ICAA was starting to dissolve.

Another significant development was noted by Bong Ro in a report on a conference he attended in April 1991,²⁷ which he described as 'somewhat different' from others he had attended. He was referring to the 4th INFEMIT Conference held at Osijek, Yugoslavia which discussed the 'biblical mandate for socio-political concerns of the Christian church and formulated the biblical evangelical theology of social justice and political freedom'. What struck Ro first of all was that conference participants were 'committed evangelicals who believe in the historical-biblical faith of the Christian church with much concern for Christian social responsibility'. He found that the 'discussion widened the scope of

²⁶ R. Kemp (editor), *Text and Context in Theological Education*, (ICAA Monograph Series No. 4) (Springwood: ICAA, 1994).

²⁷ *TN* Vol 22 No 3 (Apr.-June 1991); *Transformation* Vol 8 No 3 (July-Sept. 1991), pp. 1-6.

evangelism, church ministry and social concerns'. A second point was that, unlike many other conferences where westerners usually dominated, this one was led mainly by the two-thirds world theologians and church leaders, including in this case Vinay Samuel, Rene Padilla, Samuel Escobar and Kwame Bediako (although Ronald Sider and Chris Sugden were also present)—all of whom had strong links with the Theological Commission.

Such ideas may have been 'somewhat different' for Ro, but they had been on the TC agenda at least since the early 1980s and especially in the establishment of *Transformation* magazine by the Ethics and Society Unit. These views had been vigorously encouraged in the early days of the TC by a previous WEF General Secretary, Waldron Scott, who was noted for his robust belief in the positive relationships between mission, discipleship and social justice. While in the WEF office, he adopted the policy that WEF should function as an 'umbrella' organization, 'providing a place for evangelicals of all persuasions to come together ... in an "open space" without undue restrictions'.²⁸

28 David Howard, *The Dream that would not Die: the birth and growth of the World Evangelical Fellowship 1846-1986* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), p. 123; Scott, who served at various times with The Navigators, LCWE, American Leprosy Mission and other groups, was General Secretary of WEF, 1975-81; see *Transformation* Vol 8 No 4, 1991 pp. 16-18, 22 for his biography and work with Holistic Ministry International, and his *Bring Forth Justice: a Contemporary Perspective on Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); he was also the author of one of the TC monographs, *Karl Barth's Theology of Mission* (1978).

What was true about Ro's observation was the growing influence of such views on social justice in the wider evangelical community and the way some TC members and others were developing their relationships and their ideas on third-world missiology through the INFEMIT organization and allied bodies. This was particularly noticeable in the journal *Transformation* and its associated research institution, the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, with which INFEMIT was associated.²⁹ Such developments were not encouraged by the current WEF leadership.

'The Uniqueness of Christ'

The focus of TC interest was increasingly directed to the next consultation and general meeting originally planned for Bogor, a resort centre outside Jakarta in Indonesia, in June 1992 as part of the 9th WEF General Assembly. However, visa and other problems led to it being transferred at relatively short notice to the Philippines, first at Lake Taal but then, on account of potential volcanic activity in the area, it was moved first to one site in Manila and then finally to the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

Despite all this dislocation, the TC Consultation went smoothly with 85 present from 28 countries. Twenty papers were presented in a packed program, focusing sharply on the theme, 'The Unique Christ in our Pluralistic

29 See the article by Dr C. Sugden, 'Mission Leadership and Christian Theological Research' elsewhere in this issue for developments and thinking that led to the formation of INFEMIT and the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies.

World'.³⁰ Veteran TC leader, Dr Bruce Nicholls, introduced the topic in his keynote address by stressing the importance of understanding the exact meaning of Christ's uniqueness and effectively relating this to all aspects of Christian life and culture. The plenary speakers presented a summary of their papers, covering the uniqueness of Christ in relation to various sub-topics: plurality of religions, the challenge of modernity, diversity and unity of church understandings, political ideologies, the hope and judgement of the world and peace and justice. A 6500 word declaration was produced and ultimately the papers were published, thus making them available to a wider audience.³¹

Reports indicated that *ERT* was in good condition, although the subscription rate was considered to be still too high. Ro had been discussing with Overseas Council how the Scholarship Program could be extended. Two more consultations were being planned—one on Eschatology with the AD2000 movement (which did not eventuate), and another on Evangelization of the Poor. There were positive reports from the Expository Preaching Unit led by Dr Peter Lewis(UK), Evangelisation (Dr Ken Gnanakan) and Ethics and

Society (Dr Chris Sugden). Outside the TC orbit, but involving the efforts of both the chair and the Executive Secretary, there would be the GCOWE II (Global Consultation on World Evangelization), sponsored by the AD2000 movement, in June 1994.³²

A major item of business was the adoption of the report of the Ecumenical Issues Task Force on the 'Confessing the One Faith' project. The Convenor, Dr Schrotenboer, made recommendations about further studies covering Scripture and Tradition, Evangelism and Salvation in Inter-Church relations and Evangelicals and Visible Unity. The first of these would be the subject of the Unit's next project. He also foreshadowed that the WEF Executive had agreed to further talks with the Roman Catholic Church to address in depth some of the issues arising from the 'Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives on Roman Catholicism' report of 1986. Following up on the introductory sessions held in 1988 and 1990, it was clear that the earlier report had dealt only with the familiar polemic doctrinal differences between evangelicals and Roman Catholics rather than the underlying issues such as Scripture and tradition, and the nature of the church. These would be the subject of the ensuing talks.

It was reported that the long delayed book of papers on the WCC assembly, *Beyond Canberra: Evangelical Responses to Contemporary Ecumenical Issues*, edited by Nicholls and Ro, had met with the disapproval of the

30 The Asia Theological Association shared in this consultation.

31 Bruce J. Nicholls (editor), *The Unique Christ in our Pluralist World* (Carlisle/ Grand Rapids: Paternoster/Baker, 1994). Some of the papers were also published in *ERT* Vol 17 No 1 (Jan. 1993), which was devoted to the topic of the 'Uniqueness of Christ' and the statement was published as one of the TC 'Outreach and Identity' Series monographs in 1993.

32 The date was later changed to 17-25 May, 1995.

WEF Executive. It was decided to appeal for a reversal of this decision, but if this failed, then the editors were free to find another publisher.

At the conclusion of the 1992 meeting, over fifty names were proposed as TC members and a new Executive was appointed. The study program was also changed so that the work was given to Task Forces which were grouped into a simplified system of four Study Units.³³ Two key Study Units came under new leadership—Chris Sugden was suddenly replaced in his work with the Ethics and Society Unit by Dr Bong Ho Son of Korea, while Rolf Hille of Germany took over leadership of the Faith and Church Unit. Other units were Theology of Missions and Evangelism (Bishop Gbonigi) and Church and Ministry (Rev. Rene Daidanso). The next consultation was set down for Guatemala in 1995, but many other events intervened to prevent that idea ever coming to fruition.

Ethics and Environment

A second major consultation for the year took place 26-31 August, 1992. It was conducted by the Ethics and Society Unit, and led by the outgoing convenor, Chris Sugden, in conjunction with the Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies at its centre near Mancelona, Michigan, USA. The conference was attended by sixty people from eight countries, with the theme, 'Chris-

tians caring for creation'. Initiated at the 1990 TC meetings, it was planned as a global response to issues that had been largely neglected by evangelicals and as an opportunity to present an alternate and more biblically balanced view than those which had emerged in other settings.³⁴ This consultation was the last productive effort of the Ethics and Society Unit, concluding a long series of stimulating projects.

Change of focus

The previous two or three years had been filled with a busy round of activities and initiatives which were effectively restoring the thrust of the Commission as a global organization committed to advancing evangelical theology as a basis for discerning the obedience of faith. However, late in 1992, there was an announcement of an important development which was intended to result in a significant new focus for its work. The concept had much to commend it, but in the context of the changes and challenges already facing the organization, it would have a disturbing effect.

At a WEF Staff meeting in December 1992, Dr Augustin ('Jun') Vencer³⁵

³³ The Executive was Dr P. Kuzmič (chair), R. Daidanso (vice-chair), R. Hille, W. Gasque, E. Gbonigi, P. Arana, Bong Ho Son (replacing W. Chow), with Bong Rin Ro as Executive Director, R. Kemp (ICAA) and B. J. Nicholls (Editor, *ERT*).

³⁴ A lengthy statement, 'Evangelical Christianity and the environment' was prepared and published in an expanded version of *ERT* Vol 17 No 2 (April 1993), along with eleven papers; the statement was also published as No. 7 of the TC 'Outreach and Identity' monograph series in 1993; see also *Transformation* Vol 9 No 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1992), pp. 27-30.

³⁵ Jun Vencer with John Allan, *Poor is no Excuse: the story of Jun Vencer* (Exeter/Grand Rapids: Paternoster/Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989).

who had become the WEF International Director at the General Assembly earlier in the year, presented his vision for the entire organization in terms of 'new target'. By this he meant that the work of the WEF would become strongly directed towards strengthening National Evangelical Fellowships (NEFs), of which there were now about seventy.³⁶ His strategy involved global networking, defining programs and replicating WEF ministries at national level, and especially leadership development at national and local levels. The Commissions were an integral part of this plan.

This meant that the emphasis of the TC would now be not so much on working with theologians, seminaries and theological associations. Instead, as *TN* reported,³⁷ it would 'work closely with NEFs which in turn would strengthen the respective national theological commissions', although as the report conceded, the TC 'must not also overlook the existing regional theological associations with which it had been associated in past years ...' It would also need to change from working on traditional theological topics to focus on training national church leadership, and on the development of faculty, library and plant in seminaries.

These plans, which reflected views on theological education published by Vencer much earlier,³⁸ were adopted

strongly by Bong Ro. In his efforts to 'change the status quo' of the TC, he was supported by the WEF North American Director, Galen Hiestand, with whom he had conferred at length.³⁹ The pair of them had extensive discussions with Overseas Council about the future of the scholarship scheme. These new ideas were presented to the TC Executive during 1993 in the form of recommendations about an 'Evangelical Leadership Development Fund'.

One important consequence of this plan for the TC to be much more directly involved in theological education would be overlap with the ICAA and its constituency. However, the TC did not have the ability to generate the resources needed to fund such ambitious plans as these, which was left to other more specialized groups such as OC and the Langham Trust.

At the time, the ICAA itself was moving more towards its goal of being a 'full service agency' for evangelical theological education, rather than merely an association of accrediting agencies. This process was advanced by its 1993 Consultation held 19-23 July in Bangkok, Thailand on the theme, 'Affirming the Spectrum: Doing Theological Education Together'. Thus there was less reason for the TC

36 See also Jun Vencer, 'Churches transforming the nations: the DNA vision', *ERT* Vol 24 No 4 (Oct.-Dec. 2000), pp. 301-327; 'New Direction for Theological Commission', *TN* Vol 25 No 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1995), p. 5.

37 *TN* Vol 24 No 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1993), p. 1f.

38 *TN/TET* Vol 19 No 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1987).

39 *Evangelical World*, July 1993, p. 7. 'Up to now, the TC has been issue oriented....But after these two years of thinking and reflection, Dr Ro is to change the status quo.... Dr Ro would like to see the WEF Theological Commission, working closely with regional and national evangelical associations, identify and adopt theological institutions in each country and develop them to a level where they can offer good theological education.'

to work in this area. This trend, together with the decline of key study units like Faith and Church and Ethics and Society, meant that TC would need a new vision to avoid losing its way altogether.

The TC's relationships with the theological associations and other institutions in various parts of the world were also becoming more tenuous, especially in the light of the continuing reluctance by some of the current WEF leadership to support the values they fostered. The inevitable result was that these regional associations found other more supportive allegiances. In any case, the regional theological associations had their own distinctive history and ethos, and there was no official organizational relationship with TC which could be used to foster support for its work.

In these circumstances, the only hope of formal support for the TC was by relating to the NEFs. However, as reports of the previous decade acknowledged, many of them were not strong, and few had any kind of theological work as part of their program.

A TC Executive meeting at which this change in focus could have been discussed was planned to take place in association with this ICAA consultation in Thailand in July 1993, but it was cancelled due to the inability of several members to attend. This denied the TC the decisive leadership it needed to cope with the challenges of the proposed new direction and the distinct slow down in Study Unit activity at that time. However, the TC Scholarships committee did meet to consider the applications that had been received, but shortage of funds meant that little progress took place.

Publications and Consultations

Despite this, 1993 was a year of advance in the publications. Bong Ro was responsible for a significant expansion of the monograph (or Occasional Papers) 'Outreach and Identity' series which had not seen any activity for a decade. He added five titles in this period.⁴⁰ Although there was some misunderstanding about the status of the series and the propriety of this move, the rush of publications was welcome, especially since some important statements of TC consultations were made available to interested readers. But no more followed, and the series itself was not developed.

The volume on the WCC Assembly, *Beyond Canberra*, was also published by Regnum Books (Third world publishers associated with the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies) in association with Lynx Communications (SPCK) in March 1993, and the papers from the 1992 TC Consultation were being edited. Executive member, Pedro Arana (Peru), also translated some of the monographs into Spanish for wider distribution in Latin America.

Bong Ro was busy preparing a large number of entries for his *World Direc-*

⁴⁰ They were: *The Unique Christ in our Pluralistic World* (The 1992 WEF Manila Declaration); *An Evangelical response to 'Confessing the one Faith'* (WEF TC Ecumenical Issues Task Force, 1992); *Evangelical Christianity and the Environment* (WEF TC Ethics and Society Study Unit and Au Sable Institute consultation, 1992); *Toward a Theology of Theological Education* by Dieumeme Noelliste (ICAA Consultation, 1993); *Sharing the Good News with the Poor* (1993 WEF Consultation Statement).

tory of Theological Institutions, an enlarged version of similar directories that he had produced earlier for the Asian region. However, all seminaries were listed, regardless of their theological positions, and so it was not endorsed as an official TC publication when it was published in 1994, or in its second expanded edition in 1995.

One other successful venture in 1993 was the consultation on the 'Evangelization of the Poor', originally sponsored by the Ethics and Society Unit, following up an idea originally made by the AD2000 movement and building on earlier efforts by evangelicals to 'discern the theology of evangelization that is expressed in the practice of Christian ministries among the poor, and the practice that best expresses a biblical theology of evangelization among the poor'. The new Study Unit convenor, Dr Bong Ho Son, was not able to organize it, so Dr Bruce Nicholls took over this task. It was held 17-23 October in New Delhi with 25 people, including theologians, relief workers and pastors gathering from ten countries, who presented papers and also made field trips to development projects and slum areas to gain a first hand understanding of the topic. Participants were struck by the abject poverty of slum dwellers in many parts of Asia and the world and the corresponding lack of interest shown in their spiritual needs. So they saw an urgent need to re-evaluate the theological basis for Christian social ministries, and to establish an emphasis on evangelism and church planting as well as provision of food and shelter. This would mean local churches should be involved in Christian social responsibilities in their areas and that

pastors and church leaders should be better trained in understanding poverty and suffering.⁴¹

Another continuing sign of significant activity was seen in the Ecumenical Issues Task Force. Following the preliminary talks between the WEF leadership and the Roman Catholic Church in 1988 and 1990, the next phase in the conversations between the two bodies took place at Venice—21-25 October 1993, consisting of a carefully prepared consultation. The topics discussed were Scripture and Tradition, and Justification by Faith. No official statement was made, but the papers and responses to them were subsequently published in *ERT*.⁴² These talks indicated that there were two other pressing topics that divided the groups meriting discussion: the nature of the church as communion, and the nature and practice of mission and evangelism. These would be the subject of later meetings.

The early 1990s had been a busy and productive time for the TC under the energetic leadership of Bong Ro, but as the organization approached its twentieth anniversary in 1994, there would be a striking change.

(to be continued)

⁴¹ Papers were published in *ERT* Vol 18 No 2 (Apr. 1994), and in B. J. Nicholls and Beulah R. Woods (editors), *Sharing Good News with the Poor* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996).

⁴² *ERT* Vol 21 No 2 (April 1997), pp. 101-154) under the theme, *Justification, Scripture and Tradition*.

Church and Politics

David Gitari

KEYWORDS: *Creation, stewardship, divine image, incarnation, holistic witness, revival, pietism*

IN Kenya I was not merely an observer of but an active participant in the unfolding drama of church-state relationship. The experience of faithful Christians in Kenya in their struggle to be true witnesses of the gospel could also be a help to Christians in other parts of Africa who are being confronted with similar challenges.

For many years Kenya had been a British Colony but we fought for and gained our independence in 1963. Ever since, Kenya has been known over many years as one of the very few African countries which has enjoyed true freedom and democracy. Kenya has also often been quoted among the few African countries which are not under military rule. It is true that except for a short lived air-force *coup d'état* on 1st Aug 1982, Kenya has not experienced a violent military

takeover. Seen from that perspective Kenya has been exemplary in terms of political and economic growth. At the same time Kenya might be one of the few countries outside Southern Africa where church leaders have boldly taken issues with those in authority and as a result Kenya may provide a very fertile ground in the study of church-state relations.

The Great Debate Never Debated

Key church leaders in Kenya have been longing for an opportunity to meet the Kenyan politicians to debate recurrent issues pertaining to the welfare of our nation. The debate mainly revolves around this question, 'Should the church be involved in politics?'. Every time a church leader makes a statement that appears political, politicians rush at him, warning him to stick to the pulpit and leave politics to politicians.

The Sunday sermons of some

David Gitari of Kenya was brought up in a Christian pioneer missionary family and worked as an untrained teacher before studying theology in Bristol, UK. He served as General Secretary, Pan-African Fellowship of Evangelical Students, and then General Secretary, Bible Society of Kenya. From 1975 he was Anglican Bishop of Mt. Kenya East, Bishop of Kirinyaga Diocese from 1990. In 1997 he became Archbishop of Kenya, retiring in 2002. He holds degrees from the Universities of Nairobi and London and Hon. DDs from Ashland Seminary, Ohio and University of Kent. Strongly influenced by the Lausanne Congress, he has been a leading advocate of holistic witness in Kenya, even at considerable personal risk. He was chairman of the WEF Theological Commission 1980-86. This article (adapted from Transformation Vol 8 No 3, July-Sept. 1991, pp. 7-17 and used by permission) is part of our 30th anniversary series and presents the author's theological basis for socio-political involvement.

church leaders receive good coverage in the Monday secular newspapers. One can always be certain that the following day the daily papers will carry statements by politicians rebuking the church leaders for daring to comment on current political issues from the pulpit. Many times church leaders have been challenged to resign their positions and stand for political party elections if they want to involve themselves in politics instead of hiding behind the pulpit and turning it into a political platform in the guise of preaching.

These threats have led some church leaders to develop a kind of fear that leads them to turn against their fellow church leaders whom they condemn and accuse of abandoning the mission of the church 'to save souls from sin'. With the same breath of condemnation, they feel duty bound to praise the state for giving the church 'freedom of worship'. The church leaders who adopt this position are by far the majority but their impact on society is negligible. This stand is faulty and is based on a misunderstanding of the mission of the church as well as on a misunderstanding of what political involvement really means. To condemn anyone for political involvement is by its very nature political involvement; likewise to praise politicians for whatever reason is also political involvement.

To give politicians credit for giving 'freedom of worship' to the church, is to give them credit where credit is not in the least deserved. It is God our creator who has given us freedom to worship him and no one else can take that freedom from us. Politicians tried to deny Daniel freedom to worship his God by casting him in the lions' den.

But in that den Daniel continued to exercise his freedom of worship (Daniel 6). The least that those in authority can do is not to give freedom of worship but rather to guarantee the same.

Church leaders who have adopted the attitude that politics and religion cannot be mixed may have come to the conclusion that there is nothing to be debated as the line of demarcation between church and politics is very clear. It may be more correct to say that such church leaders have joined the debate on the side of politicians and have themselves taken a political stand without realizing that that is the case.

On the other hand, there are a few church leaders whom the Kenyan Press prefer to call 'controversial' because they have refused to be intimidated. They have consistently continued to proclaim the holistic gospel, applying the same to contemporary situations. I happen to be one of those few and for that reason I may be allowed to speak using the first person plural.

We often pleaded with politicians, including party leaders and parliamentarians, to agree that we hold a conference to discuss church/state relationships. But our request was always turned down. As a result the great debate continues from the pulpit or political platform but without a chance for personal encounter between the protagonists. In that case it is no wonder the press has been extravagantly used as a meeting point between the 'controversial church leaders' and politicians. Yet one might pause and ask whether this press encounter helps to heal the growing rift in any way. However, we believe that in the

final analysis the truth will be triumphant. Given the opportunity to meet the politicians whose opinions on church-state relationship verge on political fanaticism, we would present our case from our biblical and theological convictions.

The Doctrines of Creation and Humanity

The story of creation recorded in the book of Genesis chapter one portrays God as the one who 'lets be'. And God said, 'let there be light, and there was light' (Gen. 1:3). God is the one who says, 'let there be' and whatever he wishes to be comes into being. God the creator can therefore be called, 'He who lets be'. In this 'letting be' God confers 'being' on what he creates. This 'letting be' is both his creativity and his love. God did not create the universe and then abandon it. He continues to sustain his creation by letting be. The creatures which God has made are in turn called upon to participate in God's creativity. As John Macquarrie has put it,

Thus the fullest imitation of our participation in God comes about when the creature in turn 'lets be' ... living beings which reproduce themselves participate in letting be more than do the inanimate things; but on a far higher level is man who, with his capacity — however limited — for creativity and love brings the 'imitation' of God on to an altogether new level, that of free co-operation in 'letting be'.¹

The climax of God's creation was the creation of human beings. Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth' (Gen. 1:26). In this passage we have the doctrine of *Imago Dei* being closely connected with the Doctrine of Dominion. The doctrine of *Imago Dei* shows that humanity is created in the image of God and the doctrine of humanity is supposed to be — to have dominion over all creation. 'When the image is obscured, then dominion is impaired, when the image is restored, the dominion is fulfilled.'² Humankind was created in God's image so that they could co-operate with God not only in 'letting be' but also in caring for what God has created.

It should be noted that God did not say the dominion over all creation was reserved only to certain sections of humanity. It was not the 'male' who was told to have dominion over the earth — it was both the male and the female. It was not 'politicians' alone who were given dominion over creation; this dominion belongs to all human beings. Politicians left on their own have sometimes made decisions which have devastated creation and their actions have demonstrated the reality of the doctrine of the fall.

Politicians and those who rule must be reminded that though humanity is the Lord's creation and ruler of nature, this must not be taken as a personal

¹ John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (London: SCM, 1967), p. 208.

² Alan Richardson, *Genesis 1-11* (London, SCM, 1953), p. 56.

right. Rather he should see himself as God's vicegerent, responsible to God for his stewardship. Otherwise, as Alan Richardson says, 'his science and industry will bring not a blessing but a curse, they will make the earth not a paradise but a dust-bowl or a Hiroshima'.³ Human history is full of sad spectacles of humanity's age-long effort to subdue the earth to its own end and not to God's glory. The *Imago Dei* though not completely obliterated is indeed defaced.

With this understanding, church leaders have every right to remind decision makers that the earth belongs to God (Ps. 24:1). God has appointed human beings (not just politicians) to be the stewards of creation and to exercise proper accountability of their stewardship. After all, it is not to fallen humanity that the promise contained in Genesis 1:27-28 will be fulfilled; it will be to the redeemed humanity of the last Adam, the church of Christ: 'whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son' (Rom. 8:29).

The creation story clearly shows that God's purpose in creating man was not to leave him as a lonely creature, but to make him a social being. Thus God says, 'I will make him a helper fit for him' (Gen. 2:18) — this is because God himself is social and the decision to create man in Genesis 1:26 is introduced with the plural words, 'let us make man in our image, in our likeness'. As Christopher Wright puts it,

The first fact about this 'image of

God' is sexuality, that complementary duality in unity, from which flows the rest of man's social nature: marriage, parenthood, family, kinship, and outward in widening circles ... God himself, therefore, in the mystery of Trinity, subsists in the harmonious relationship of equal Persons, each of whom possesses his proper function and authority. Man, his image, was created to live in the harmony of personal equality but with social organisation that required functional structures of authority. The ordering of social relationships and structures, locally, nationally and globally, is of direct concern to our creator God, then. But that is precisely the stuff of politics. Hence, while the Bible makes no unnatural separation between 'politics' and 'religion', it does not portray them as identical. Both are essential dimensions of what it is to be human. Man the worshipper is also man the political animal, for God made him so.⁴

To 'let be' may also be understood as 'enabling'. Human beings have a duty before God to assist each individual or community to make full use of their potential. God did not make Eve for Adam so that Adam could exploit her and hinder her from being a fulfilled creature. She was made to be a helper with full potential to explore and create. Cain and Abel were both born with full potential to let be. Abel

3 Richardson, *Genesis 1-11*, p. 55.

4 C. J. H. Wright, *Living as the People of God* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1983), pp. 104-105.

had the talents of a shepherd and Cain the talents of a farmer. As a result of jealousy, Cain the older and stronger brother killed Abel the younger and the weaker brother. In other words, Cain will not let his brother be. He will not permit him to continue looking after the sheep and making his economic contribution.

To this day those stronger brothers who have found their way to positions of power and authority will keep an eye on their weaker brothers and will not allow them to exercise their full potential as God's chosen stewards of creation. Cain would rather have his brother dead than see him rising as a political leader to become the Minister for Livestock Development.

The doctrine of Creation and the doctrine of Humanity convince us that the affairs of this world cannot be left to politicians alone. The welfare of human beings is so important an issue that it cannot be left to a few politicians alone.

The Doctrine of Incarnation

Our understanding of the doctrine of incarnation gives us further mandate to be deeply involved in the social, economic and political affairs of our country. The prologue to the gospel according to St John declares that: '... the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father' (John 1: 14).

The Logos which had existed before the world was created and which participated with God the Father in the creation of all things now becomes flesh without losing the qualities of Logos in any way. The Word does not

only become flesh but also dwells among human beings. The clause 'and dwelt among us' emphasizes that the Logos really shared our human lot by taking residence in our midst.

As Ezekiel had prophesied to the exiles who had been deprived of the temple which symbolized God's presence among his people, 'my tabernacle shall be with them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people' (Ezek. 37:27). John in his prologue now suggests this prophecy is fulfilled, not in a restored temple but in the incarnate logos who is the true temple. The Gospel of John presents the Word which became flesh as Jesus, a truly human being who mingled with people, and felt such human emotions as hunger, sorrow, anger, pity etc. John's prologue suggests that this incarnate Logos revealed his divinity not so much in mighty acts, though these were important, but in his revelation of divine glory through loving and humble service, 'It is moral attributes which matter, grace and faith come through Jesus Christ.'⁵

The way the early church may have formulated its faith in the incarnate Christ is recorded by Paul in Philippians 2:5-8.

Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking a form of a servant, being born in the likeness

⁵ Howard Marshall, 'Incarnational Christology in the New Testament' in H. H. Rowdon, ed., *Christ the Lord* (Leicester: Intervarsity, 1982), p. 4.

of man and being formed in the human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross.

The key phrase in this *Kenosis* passage is that (he) '*emptied himself*'. Unlike Adam who was tempted by the devil to be like God, the second Adam did not commit this 'robbery' and therefore remained faithful to divine destiny to be the image of God. Therefore he emptied himself; that is, 'that he determined himself to become a man, to enter into the humanity which had lost the likeness of God'.⁶ In order to become like a man he had to empty himself—had to abandon 'the glorious and Lordly prerogatives which go along with equality with God in order to take on the humble form of a servant and to die'.⁷ Salvation history clearly shows that God wanted to redeem fallen humanity and to reconcile it to himself. To do this, God had to become a human being and to dwell in our midst with all the risks which this self-emptying implies — even death on the cross.

Billy Graham told a crusade rally in Nairobi that he once stepped on an ant-hill by mistake and it crumbled. Then he noticed how busy the ants were trying to rebuild their city. Being a man of God he very much wanted to assist in the rebuilding of the hill. Then he realized that to be able to assist the ants in this task he had to become an ant himself, otherwise he could offer no help. Similarly, for God to be able to redeem humanity, he had to empty himself,

take the form of a servant and be born in the likeness of man. The writer of Hebrews begins his letter by introducing his own form of incarnational theology:

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power (Heb. 1:1-3).

In days gone by, God spoke to people in many and various ways, through the prophets, using different modes such as visions, angelic revelations, prophetic words and events. The prophets were men raised by God to challenge the injustices and other evils of their time. Their mandate to prophesy was their unshakeable conviction that they spoke from God. Their ability to say, 'God says', gave their words a unique authority. Though ill treated they persisted with their message. As Donald Guthrie says, 'Their stories make heroic reading, but what they said was incomplete. The writer knows that it needed a better method of communication, and he recognises that this has come in Jesus Christ'.⁸ The essence of Christian revelation is that God himself has now spoken in his Son because Jesus Christ perfectly shows all that is knowable about the father.

In days gone by God was speaking

⁶ Oscar Cullman, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1959), p. 178.

⁷ Howard Marshall, *Christ the Lord*, p. 7.

⁸ Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Tyndale Commentary Series) (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1983), p. 62.

by the mouth of agents. But in these last days God has spoken in a much more superior way- by his own Son. To see the Son and to hear him is to see God and to hear God: '... he who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9). By the coming of Jesus into this world, God himself has come on the stage of human history, not to be a spectator but to be deeply involved in the affairs of men and women. Jesus has come on the stage of human history to confront men and women with the very message of God himself with a challenge to accept or reject it.

Involvement

When politicians call upon church leaders to confine themselves to spiritual matters one cannot help feeling that they would prefer the Logos to remain where he was from the beginning; that the heavenly Christ should not empty himself; and God should not send his son to speak from the platform of human history. To tell us not to be involved in the welfare of our country is virtually to tell us not to follow the example of Jesus Christ. Jesus assumed human form and took up residence in this world, prepared to take part as a perfect human being in every sphere of life with the hope of bringing salvation to the world. In his earthly life Jesus did not live in an ivory tower of meditative asceticism like the Qumran Community or the early Christian monks. He went out into every city and every village as Matthew tells us: 'And Jesus went about all cities and villages, teaching in the synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity' (Mt. 9:35).

By going where people were, he was able to see with his own eyes the plight of the people and to make statements which the politicians of the day would have considered highly political and provocative. 'When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd' (Mt. 9:36).

The crowds he saw were harassed politically as they were under Roman Colonialists, harassed economically as the rich were making themselves richer at the expense of the poor, and harassed religiously as the Pharisees were putting unbearable burdens on the people: '...They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them by their finger' (Mt. 23:4).

The incarnate Lord seeing all this harassment could not help being moved by compassionate pity — the kind of pity that touches the core of one's inner being. He could not be moved by such compassion and remain the same. He had to take the necessary action to help the helpless — to feed the hungry, heal the sick, cast out demons and challenge the status quo.

Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees hypocrites! for you tithe mint and dill and cummin and have neglected weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done without neglecting the others, you blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! (Mt. 23:23-24).

The Pharisees and Sadducees of the day had been so concerned 'to apply the tithing law in respect of every garden herb that justice, mercy and faith

have been ignored'.⁹

The doctrine of incarnation expresses the perception that Jesus 'emptied himself' and chose to 'become flesh' and to live among us, thus identifying himself with humanity. This demands our Christian presence in the world so that we may be able not only to evangelize but also to be involved in every aspect of human life. The incarnational model invites us to proclaim the gospel not from a distance but rather by penetrating communities and cultures, cities and villages so that we can see for ourselves the harassment and helplessness of God's people and then stand in solidarity with them even if that means taking a political stand which brings hope to humanity.

The Doctrine of the Kingdom of God

The doctrine of the kingdom of God demonstrates how the Incarnate Son of God got deeply involved in the affairs of the world be they economic, political, social or spiritual.

The Synoptic Gospels are all agreed that the main theme of the preaching of Jesus was the kingdom of God. The Gospel according to St. Mark tells us that after the arrest of John the Baptist, Jesus went into Galilee preaching the gospel of God and saying, 'The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel' (Mark 1:15). Jesus was convinced that he had an obligation to preach the kingdom of God because it was for that pur-

pose that he came to this world (see Luke 4:43). Scholars have vigorously debated on whether Jesus thought the kingdom he was preaching was entirely future or entirely present. As Ron Sider has put it:

... there is a growing consensus that, in striking contrast to contemporary Jewish thought, Jesus viewed the Kingdom as both present and future. Jewish eschatology looked forward to a supernatural convulsion when the Messiah would come to destroy Israel's natural enemies in bloody battle and initiate a new age of Messianic peace. In Jewish expectation there was a radical, almost total break, between the old age and the new Messianic age. Jesus on the other hand, taught that the Messianic age had actually broken into the old age. Its powers were already at work in this old age in his person and work, even though the Kingdom would come in its fullness at the end of history.¹⁰

Rene Padilla goes further to emphasize that the central theme of the preaching of Jesus

is not hope of the coming of the Kingdom at some predictable date in the future, but the fact that in his own person and work the Kingdom is already present among men and women in great power, ... the Kingdom of God's dynamic power

⁹ Richard France, *Matthew* (Tyndale Commentary Series) (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), p. 328.

¹⁰ Ronald Sider, 'Christian Ethics and the Good News of the Kingdom' in *Proclaiming Christ in Christ's Way*, edited by Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (Oxford: Regnum, 1989), pp. 127-128.

made visible through concrete signs pointing to him as Messiah: 'the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured and the good news is preached to the poor' (Luke 7:22). In other words, God in Christ is showing his passionate concern for the poor. A new eschatological reality is present in human history affecting human life not only morally and spiritually but also physically and psychologically, materially and socially The completion of God's purpose still lies in the future but the foretaste of the eschaton is already possible.¹¹

East African Revival

Our Evangelical tradition in East Africa has put more emphasis on preaching the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus who will come to take the saved ones to heaven and punish the sinners. The East African Revival Movement which began in the early 1930s in Rwanda and spread to Burundi, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania has for six decades challenged sinners to accept Christ Jesus as their personal saviour in preparation for his coming again. A person who accepts Christ is received in the fellowship of the brethren where he or she has to walk in the 'light' by confessing any sins he/she might have committed since the last meeting of the fellowship. In the fellowship meeting one will often hear,

'since our last meeting, I fell into a sin of jealousy and if Jesus came, I would have been left behind. But now I have repented and am ready to go with Jesus to heaven.' The repentant brother or sister is restored back to the fellowship by the whole group singing 'Tukuten-dereza' (Glory) song.

The Revival movement has had a great impact on the life of the church in East Africa. For example, during the persecution in the time of the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya and in Idi Amin's reign of terror in Uganda, it was those who belonged to the revival movement who were prepared to stand up and be counted as followers of Jesus Christ even if it meant death. However, the Revival movement has been more of an inward looking spiritual movement, concerned more about the kingdom to come rather than participating in the kingdom which Jesus came to inaugurate here on earth. The brethren are so concerned about their own individual souls that they show little concern for the corrupt and sinful world around them except to invite sinners to come out of the 'sinking ship' and join the 'life boat' of the brethren. At the time of the struggle for independence, the brethren kept aloof from the politics of the day.

After independence, the brethren took little interest in joining political parties and in involvement in active politics. If a 'brother in the Lord' stood for elections he was seen like a brother who had become spiritually lukewarm or who had backslidden. The advent of Idi Amin as the ruler of Uganda did not worry the brethren at first. But when he killed Archbishop Luwum, many Ugandan brethren who ran away to neighbouring countries were com-

¹¹ Rene Padilla, 'The Politics of the Kingdom of God and the Political Mission of the Church' in *Proclaiming Christ in Christ's Way*, pp. 185-186.

pelled to revise their theology of the kingdom from a perspective of refugees and exiles. Uganda, which is 75% Christian, had given a murderous Muslim dictator a chance to rule the country. The regime affected even the 'brethren' in the safety of their revival ivory towers.

Conversion

When Kenyan politicians tell us to leave politics to politicians and to confine ourselves to the pulpit, they seem to take for granted that the purpose of religion is to prepare people for the future, not the present; theirs is a concept of a passive religion that tells citizens to accept decisions without question; to obey those in authority for the sake of the peace of the nation; to prepare souls for the life to come. But such a concept of religion contradicts the very teaching of Jesus Christ as far as the kingdom of God is concerned. But it may be politicians see what they assume is true religion in the lives of those who are 'converted' or born again Christians and who understand 'conversion' to mean aloofness; they are not of this world. Politicians have an easy time with such religion because it poses no threat. Yet as Jim Wallis puts it,

Conversion in the Bible is always firmly grounded in history, it is always addressed to the actual situation in which people find themselves. People are never called to conversion in an historical vacuum. They turn to God in the midst of concrete historical events, dilemmas and choices. That turning is always deeply personal, but it is

never private. It is never an abstract or theoretical concern; conversion is always a practical issue. Any idea of conversion that is removed from the social and political realities of the day is simply not biblical.¹²

Conversion in the New Testament makes sense only from the perspective of the kingdom of God. To be converted to Christ means to give one's allegiance to the kingdom, to enter into God's purpose for the world expressed in the language of the kingdom. Thus when the disciples responded to Jesus' invitation, they joined him, followed him, transferred their allegiance to him, and as a result they became a Community of the New Order. Again Jim Wallis puts it thus:

Our conversion then cannot be an end in itself; it is the first step of entry into the Kingdom. Conversion marks the birth of the movement out of the merely private existence into a public consciousness. Conversion is the beginning of a true solidarity with the purpose of the Kingdom of God in the world. No longer pre-occupied with our private lives, we are engaged in a vocation for the world Turning from ourselves to Jesus identifies us with him in the world. Conversion therefore is to public responsibility —as defined by the Kingdom of God, not by the state. Our own salvation, which began with a personal decision about Jesus Christ, becomes intimately

¹² Jim Wallis, *The Call to Conversion* (Tring: Lion Publishing, 1981), p. 5.

linked with the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God.¹³

Our politicians will wonder what exactly we mean by the kingdom of God. Our Lord gave us a definition of the kingdom when he taught disciples how to pray. The Lord's Prayer includes the petition, 'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' (Mt. 6:10-11).

Your Kingdom Come

In other words, the kingdom of God 'is the society upon earth where God's will is as perfectly done as it is in Heaven'.¹⁴ As Soritua Nababan told the CWME Conference on the theme 'Your Kingdom Come', held in Melbourne, Australia in May 1980,

to pray 'Your Kingdom Come', is to pray for the impossible from a human point of view, both in our personal as well as public life. In our personal sphere, to pray 'Your Kingdom Come' means to ask and therefore work out the end of the reign of one's own will, riches, power, welfare, honour... It is to give up inherited cultural identity for a totally new, transformed identity which is neither western nor eastern, neither Asian nor African nor Latin American, but in fact—a Christ-like identity... In public life to pray, 'Your Kingdom Come' is to ask for the full revelation of what Christ did: 'He disarmed principalities and powers and made a public

example of them, triumphing over them in him' (Col. 2:15). It is to ask therefore to work for the end of the powers which are the ordered structures of society and the spiritual powers which lie behind them and undergird religious structures, intellectual structures, moral structures, political structures etc.¹⁵

In Matthew chapter 25, Jesus said that at the end of the time those who will possess the kingdom of God are those who on this earth feed the hungry, give a drink to the thirsty, give hospitality to strangers, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit those in prison (Mt. 25:42f). When God's will is done in response to the needs of the poor, then they themselves have a taste of the kingdom and those who respond to their needs qualify to be received in the kingdom to come. But note the cries of the present day poor:

I was hungry and you appointed a commission to enquire into my hunger;

I was thirsty and you made Coca Cola to exploit my thirst;

I was a stranger and you put a sign 'Mbwa Kali' (Beware fierce dog) at the entrance to your home;

I was naked and you smuggled second hand clothes from a neighbouring country and sold them to me at an exorbitant price;

I was sick with 'AIDS' and you said you cannot visit a sinner;

I was in detention without trial

¹³ Wallis, *Conversion*, p. 9.

¹⁴ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* Vol 1 (Edinburgh: St Andrew's Press, 1975), p. 212.

¹⁵ *Your Kingdom Come, Report of the Melbourne Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, 1980* (Geneva: WCC, 1980), p. 3.

and you feared to visit me in case you lose your political position.

Because of your failure to respond to the needy around you, the Lord will say to you, 'Away from me, you that are under God's curse! Away to the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels! I was hungry but you would not feed me, thirsty but you would not give me a drink, I was a stranger but you would not welcome me in your home, naked but you would not clothe me, I was sick and in prison but you would not take care of me' (Matt. 25:41-43).

Church and Political Life

The church has a vital role to play in the politics of a nation. To this end I

have tried as much as possible to be actively involved in the politics of my country. Although I have often been warned by politicians to 'leave politics to politicians' I have never personally called a political rally in order to give a political address. Rather, I have always confined myself to the Word of God, expounding it faithfully and systematically and applying the same to the prevailing political situation. As is commonly said, 'truth hurts' — indeed it should because the Word of God is like a double edged sword. For this reason, in spite of the hard times I and my diocese have undergone, we have not stopped declaring God's will for our nation. The struggle to uphold and to work for justice and peace must continue.

Faith, Health and Prosperity: A Report on 'Word of Faith' and 'Positive Confession' Theologies

Editor: Andrew Perriman

This Evangelical Alliance Report examines the movement that goes under various names: 'Word of Faith', 'Positive Confession', the 'message of the Prevailing Word', the 'prosperity gospel', the 'health and wealth gospel', or in a more derogatory fashion, the 'name it and claim it' or 'blab it and grab it' gospel. Offering a detailed history of this movement, the contributors then examine the relationship between faith and wealth in the Old Testament, New Testament and New Testament church, in search of an evangelical viewpoint on faith, health and prosperity.

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Mission Leadership and Christian Theological Research

Chris Sugden

KEYWORDS: *Transformation, missiology, the poor, micro-enterprise development, social responsibility, Pentecostalism, empowerment*

Introduction

It was the author's privilege to be a member of the Unit on Ethics and Society of the TC and to take part in its studies from 1980, especially on Evangelicals and Development, Issues of Lifestyle, and the Relation between Evangelism and Social Responsibility. Later he followed Ron Sider as convenor, and led the visit of members of the Unit to South Africa in 1989 during the emergency period; he also led the study on the Environment in 1992 in collaboration with the Au Sable Institute. He was also part of the editorial team of *Evangelical Review of Theology* (ERT) while working in India from 1978-1983, and of *Transformation Journal* which from its founding in 1984

until 1988 was published under the auspices of the TC.

The team working on these issues of ethics and society was convinced that mission is the mother of theology: that the critical work that theology needs to do is set by the questions that are posed to Christian scripture and tradition as a result of obedience to Christ and the gospel in engagement with the world. Thus, the Unit on Ethics and Society engaged with the question of the relation between evangelism and social responsibility, asked what was the Christian contribution to development, and explored the nature of Christian mission (usually focused on persons) with relation to the environment. In so doing it hopefully helped to avoid some of the blind spots of theology in the early twentieth century. Regrettably, despite a century of mission engagement with other cultures, theology as a discipline did not engage with the status of other faiths,

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issues of poverty, or ancestor worship which occupied the attentions of those engaged in mission. The reason for this was the imprisonment of theology taught in universities in the categories of the Enlightenment. These suggested that theology could operate only as an objective study of texts and history which would be compromised by the enthusiasm and partisanship of those engaged in mission.

This article seeks to take the story forward. Those who worked with these concerns in the seventies and eighties did not stop there. While they handed their responsibilities in the TC on to others, they continued to pursue the vision of mission-oriented theology in various ways. This article will trace some of that movement as it has been expressed in theological and mission research, in professional Christian training, in leadership development and in publications.

A movement for holistic mission

What had begun in the Theological Commission was a movement for holistic theology and mission. The Unit on Ethics and Society in particular brought together those who were taking this forward in many parts of the world: Eastern Europe, Argentina, Kenya, India. At the same time the Lausanne Covenant in 1974 had expressed a holistic direction for mission. Over the next decade global evangelicalism wrestled with the biblical, theological, and missiological dimensions of holistic mission at consultations which the TC jointly sponsored with the Lausanne Movement, culmi-

nating in the Consultation on the Relation of Evangelism and Social Responsibility (CRESR) in 1982 and the Wheaton Consultation on the Church in Response to Human Need in 1983. Rene Padilla points out that 'Wheaton 83 completed the process of shaping an evangelical social conscience, a process in which people from the Two Thirds World played a decisive role. It made it evident to evangelicals that evangelism cannot be divorced from meaningful involvement with people in all their needs.'¹

In one sense the Wheaton Consultation drew to a close the process begun in the Lausanne Covenant which specified but did not define the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. Wheaton spoke of 'Mission as Transformation'.² 'According to the biblical view of human life then, transformation is the change from a condition of human existence contrary to God's purposes to one in which people are able to enjoy fullness of life in harmony with God. This transformation can take place only through the obedience of individuals and communities to the gospel of Jesus Christ, whose power changes the lives of men and women by releasing them from the guilt, power and consequences of sin, enabling them to respond with love toward God and toward others, and

1 Rene Padilla and Chris Sugden, *How Evangelicals Endorsed Social Responsibility* (Grove Booklets on Ethics) (Nottingham: Grove, 1985), p. 17.

2 For a collection of texts which define and develop this understanding see Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, *Mission as Transformation* (Oxford: Regnum, 1999).

making them “new creatures in Christ”.³

But in another sense the Wheaton statement was only the beginning. With the debate settled for what turned out to be a generation, mission activists globally began to work out what holistic mission meant in relation to economics, culture, religions, enterprise, politics, HIV/AIDS, sexuality. Many new questions arose for mission which were not questions of strategy (of how to) but more of content (what is the gospel when it is to be stated and expressed in a particular context).

What made the legacy of the Lausanne Covenant and the TC of the 70s and 80s so influential was the nature of participation that they represented. They were both genuinely representative of world Christianity. Lamin Sanneh defines ‘World Christianity’ as ‘the movement of Christianity as it takes form and shape in societies that previously were not Christian’ where ‘Christianity was received and expressed through the cultures, customs and traditions of the people affected’. ‘Global Christianity’ ‘on the other hand, is the faithful replication of Christian norms and patterns developed in Europe’.⁴

The Lausanne Movement and the TC were genuinely representative of

senior Christian leaders around the globe who were mission leaders, bishops, and training college principals in their own right. For that reason the platform they provided for such leaders to come together, discover each other and what God was doing around the world, proved highly creative and influential in developing evangelical theological reflection and practice. They were not the only players on the world scene at the time, but others were more characterized by Lamin Sanneh’s description of Global Christianity: they globalized certain mission strategies such as city-wide crusades, literature distribution or key points for personal evangelism, but did not give birth to evangelical theological development. Indeed, as noted below, research into one such agency committed to literature distribution is showing that, in an Asian culture under Asian leadership, it was transformed into a unique indigenous people-movement.

This reflection and practice was then embedded in the life of the world evangelical community as it was given institutional form. One institution that must be acknowledged here is World Vision. Ed Dayton and MARC were important partners in the decade of debate from 1974-1983. World Vision as an organization took forward the holistic understanding of ‘Mission as Transformation’ and embedded it into their organizational vision and planning.⁵ Recently they have taken holis-

3 ‘Transformation: The Church in Response to Human Need’ para 11 in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds.), *The Church in Response to Human Need* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, reprinted Wipf and Stock 2002).

4 Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) p. 22. (Ed.: this book is reviewed elsewhere in this issue).

5 See especially Bryant Myers, *Walking with the Poor: principles and practices of transformational development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999).

tic understanding a step further by insisting that it means that the local church is the major actor in issues of development in a community.

From movement to institutions

A number who had given leadership in the TC in the seventies and eighties identified a particular gap in the facilities available to train senior leadership in the growing church in the two-thirds world. Post-graduate doctoral research by two-thirds world scholars was at that time undertaken almost exclusively in European or North American institutions. This had two important weaknesses. First the research undertaken was significantly determined by the interests and expertise of the western-based faculty. Inevitably the context where the research was undertaken would determine the content of the research. Secondly, there was a high risk that such leaders would experience a number of irresistible pressures to remain in such contexts after graduation. As a result the very issues raised by mission into which research was needed were lost sight of, and those who were highly trained to investigate them often, for very understandable reasons, were denied to the leadership of the growing churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Those from the two-thirds world who had led the TC Unit on Ethics and Society in the seventies and eighties were concerned to preserve the momentum of mission-based theology that they had begun to develop together. As they grew in seniority

they dreamt of and succeeded in founding their own institutions in the two-thirds world to give institutional expression to these concerns, and to train a new generation in what had given life to them.

So several institutions were founded in the seventies and early 80s, including the Evangelical Theological Seminary, Osijek, Croatia; St Andrew's College of Theology and Development, Kabare, Kenya; the Akrofi-Kristaller Memorial Centre for Mission Research and Applied Theology, Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana; the Kairos Institute, Buenos Aires, Argentina; the Orlando Costas Faculty, Lima, Peru and the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. Part of the vision was also to recapture for a strongly biblical gospel other institutions founded by earlier generations which had adopted other agendas. So others invested time in theological colleges located in Malaysia, Kenya and Singapore to enable them to fulfil a strongly biblical agenda. Thus a movement for mission-based theology gave birth and also rebirth to institutions to express it and train others. This reminds us that movements for renewal have to find institutional expression if they are to last more than a generation. Much of the energy and vision of the TC of the seventies and eighties was therefore channelled into establishing institutions. This does not represent the decline of a movement, but is part of securing it.⁶

⁶ See *Strengthening our Bridges: Report submitted to the World Vision International Board from the Commission on the Church* (World Vision, Monrovia).

A Two Thirds World Movement

A further facet of the TC in the seventies and eighties was that it provided space for those from the two-thirds world to identify and address their own agendas in mission. This was the age when modernity in mission was at its height. Uniformity is part of modernity and this was the age of global mission conferences whose aim was to produce an overall vision, or strategy for global mission. It became clear as conference succeeded conference that the contribution of those who lived where the church was actually growing was in fact only secondary—they were good field studies demonstrating the validity of one or other of a range of views of mission that emanated from outside, but not participants and contributors.

In 1980 the Consultation on World Evangelisation at Pattya (the follow-up to Lausanne 1974) was called to consider strategies for world evangelization. One of the main ideas was identified as sharing the gospel with various people groups. These groups were defined primarily as religious: they were identified as Hindus, Moslems, Nominal Roman Catholics etc. These groupings were determined by the conference planners who were dominated by western missiology. Thus evangelical missiology from the West was defining people's context by their religious affiliation. But a group of two-thirds-world theologians and some from the west posed the view that the context was the total setting in which people find themselves—the social, economic and political institutions that determine their lives and the structures behind them—not just one part

of the total.

The result was that a team of people at the consultation who had worked in the TC (as well as in other settings) decided that it was time to hold a consultation where the mission and theologies of the growing churches themselves should set the agenda. The first of these conferences was held in Bangkok, Thailand in 1982 and published its findings as 'Sharing Jesus in the Two-Thirds World'.⁷ A second was held in Mexico in 1984 on the theme of the Holy Spirit, and a third at Kabare, Kenya in 1987 on the theme of the Living God.⁸ At the third conference this informal network styled itself the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians (INFEMIT). INFEMIT has claims to be a unique initiative in modern times for global mission action and reflection arising from the non-western world.

Participants at the 1982 conference addressed the issue of doctoral research and senior leadership training. They identified principles that needed to be adhered to and then sought a mechanism to enshrine them. One was that research should be rooted in the context of mission by people actively engaged in such mission. A second was that researchers should have access to the best of international university resources but without being alienated from their cultures and without uprooting or relocating their families. These principles gave the shape to

⁷ Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds.), *Sharing Jesus in the Two Thirds World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1986).

⁸ Published in *Transformation* Volume 5 No 2 (April 1988), pp. 21-23.

the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. OCMS is located in the heart of the academic resources of Oxford. Its research degrees are now validated by three United Kingdom universities. Its ninety current research students and forty graduates have engaged in a process of research study that looks at the gospel as it is lived in the lives of men and women and as it engages in the societies in which it is set.⁹ Professor Lamin Sanneh identifies this method of study as both different and innovative. It expresses the one gospel of the one Lord and the one Christ which affirms rather than evades what people in many cultures experience and which validates, ennobles and enriches human life.

Topics for research

There is, of course, a great deal of research going on in many institutions, Christian and secular throughout the world. However, much of it remains unavailable to the Christian public, and unconsulted by those who have responsibility for leadership of Christian mission and organizations. The author would like to take the opportunity of this celebratory series on the work of the WEA Theological Commission to share the fruits of the enormous investment of people's lives and resources (particularly from the two-thirds-world) in innovative research based in their own countries on the critical issues of Christian mission. On average each project has taken the

researcher five years of detailed and focused study. John Kessler, a veteran missionary in Latin America, argues¹⁰ that leadership is the most vital factor in contributing to the quality and impact of mission in the two-thirds world. So here follows a digest of some of the most noteworthy research topics conducted through OCMS which will hopefully show the need for and value of context based research.

Christian leadership

Significant research has been and is being carried out on leadership of the people of God. Dr Gideon Githiga, now Bishop of Thika in Kenya, examined the role of the churches in Kenya from the end of the colonial era to the controversial 1992 elections. He traced how the church had moved from being a partner with the colonial regime, to being a similar partner with the new independent state in order to establish its national credentials, to emerging as the only substantial force in the country opposing the excesses of President Moi, especially in abolishing the secret ballot. His analysis was that the church leaders played a role that continued the function of leaders in traditional religions to be a protector of the people against the extreme use of power. His book¹¹ was published in Kenya and was a major resource for the

¹⁰ In private conversation with the author, November 2003.

¹¹ Gideon Githiga, *The Church as the Bulwark against Authoritarianism: Development of Church-State Relations in Kenya, with particular reference to the years after Political Independence 1963-1992* (Oxford: Regnum/Uzima 2001).

⁹ Abstracts of these produced through the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies can be viewed on its website www.ocms.ac.uk.

churches in the preparation for the 2002 elections which saw the removal of President Moi.

A new researcher is continuing the story by examining the role and impact of the churches in their partnership with NGOs in addressing constitutional reform in Kenya. Bishop Stephen Mwangi, the second most senior bishop in the Anglican Church of Kenya, is currently completing research on why bishops have exercised such a significant role in the life of the nation. His findings will be an important resource for understanding the nature and role of Christian leadership in Africa. Stanley Granberg, a North American missionary in Kenya, examined how leaders were developed in the Churches of Christ in the Meru District of Kenya and concluded that the behaviour of leaders is more critical than their characteristics of age, education, wealth and experience in producing organizational effectiveness.

While leading a theological college in Karachi, Pakistan, Dr Pervaiz Sultan examined the contrasting leadership styles of two bishops in the Church of Pakistan, particularly in the way their dioceses engaged in development. He concluded that the personalities and convictions of the bishops were the most decisive factor in the way the dioceses viewed and conducted their mission.¹²

Similar research on leadership was

conducted by Joshua Hong, now director of the Church Growth Institute of the Yoido Full Gospel Church, Seoul, Korea. He examined the leaders of Korean mega-churches, such as David Yonggi-Cho, to understand the mutual relationship they had with their followers. He concluded that the founding pastor had an enormous impact on the success of these mega-churches, and that therefore the issue of inter-generational transfer of leadership would be critical for their continuance. His research has been published in Korean, as it is especially valuable as many mega-churches come to address the issue of transition from their founders.

A biblical study on the role of monarchical leaders was carried out by Tamas Czovek. The narratives of Saul, David and Solomon were examined to reveal what qualities God looked for and blessed in those who gave leadership among his people.¹³

Christian witness by and among poor people.

Poor people are very religious. A major aspect of the context for many Christians since the origins of the Christian movement has been its *engagement with those of other faiths*. Dr Ivan Satyavrata, while principal of a leading Pentecostal theological college in India, undertook research to explore whether there was any continuity between the religious experience and philosophy of the Hindus and Christian spirituality

¹² *Church and Development: A case study from Pakistan* (FACT Publications 2001, St Thomas Theological College, Trinity Close, Abdullah Haroon Road, Karachi 75530, Pakistan).

¹³ Published in *Transformation* as 'Three Seasons of Charismatic Leadership', Vol 19 No 4 (October 2002) and Vol 20 No 1 (January 2003)

that could be spoken of as fulfilment. He found there to be some significant if limited continuity. Dr David Singh explored a Muslim sect which added inner revelation to the revelation through the text of the Quran to explore whether the experience of immediate revelation could be a link between Christian and Islamic religious experience.¹⁴ Dr Frank Adams, the general secretary of the African Baptist Fellowship explored the possible continuity between the Odwira festival in Ghana and the Christian communion service as a means of community building. Dr John Magumba of Uganda Christian University examined the possible contribution of Baganda traditional pastoral practices to enrich Christian ministry in Uganda. Rev Geoff Morgan researched the role of developing new forms of worship in mission in East Africa.

For Dr Samuel Jayakumar, then a faculty member and now the principal of the Madras Bible Seminary, the encounter between Christian faith and Hindu religious reality was best expressed and examined in the encounter of the Dalits (outcastes) with Christian faith in the nineteenth century. In his thesis, which has become a textbook in Indian universities,¹⁵ he argued that it was Christian conversion that was responsible for the development of people's consciousness of being Dalit and the need and

opportunity to take action. This was in contrast to the prevailing ideology that Christian faith had suppressed Dalit yearnings for freedom.

Saheb John Borgall from India is currently completing research on a twentieth century movement to Christ among rural poor people in Karnataka State India. This began as a ministry of literature distribution but has been developed, most successfully by the poor themselves into a form of community evangelism, without, regrettably, the support of the original ministry.

In witness among the poor, Christians have especially engaged in *ministries of education*. Dr Jonathan Ingleby, himself an educationalist of many years experience in India and now vice-principal of a mission training college, researched competing mission strategies in India in education. One school of thought focused on training leadership for the church by educating the high-caste to reject Hindu religion and practices through the application of western rationalism. A second school focused exclusively on educating Christian converts, almost all from the poorest people, to provide leadership in the mission churches. History has shown that the second strategy produced the more lasting fruit.¹⁶ A typical development in Christian education is that its quality is most appealing to the elites and gradually institutions founded to educate the poor become the preserve of elites. To remedy this in a Catholic order, Sister Rita

14 David Singh, *Sainthood and Revelatory Discourse: An Examination of the Basis for the Authority of Bayan in the Mahdawi Islam* (New Delhi: ISPCK/Regnum, 2003).

15 Samuel Jayakumar, *Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion* (New Delhi: ISPCK/Regnum, 1999).

16 J. C. Ingleby, *Missionaries, education and India: Protestant missionary education in the long nineteenth century* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2000).

Rozario undertook research on the caste factor among prostitutes in Bombay for which her order, now running elite schools, had originally been founded. Other research is currently being carried out on Christian education for ministry in African churches.

A most innovative study of *literacy development* among the poor was undertaken by Sharon Samson in Ethiopia. She found that literacy programmes were failing in their goal of developing 100% literacy in those who took part in the programmes. The cascade effect of these programmes in promoting literacy was not being accomplished since it was always assumed that 100% literacy was needed before people could teach others. She pioneered a process of training semi-literates to teach children to read, using the medium of the scriptures in the churches. This involved examining all the current theories of literacy and developing her own theoretical basis for understanding literacy education. She field tested her programme and was delighted to discover that it was effective.

Malcolm Hunter studied the effect of decades of Christian mission among *nomadic pastoralists* in Kenya and concluded there was a need for inclusion of their spiritual values in planning for development and forms of Christian ministry which do not depend on a settled existence.

Micro-enterprise development

The collapse of Marxism as a viable and credible alternative (and thus the end to the ideological conflict over

development) led to an affirmation that widespread property ownership, either in a market-economy or a mixed system, tends to decentralise power and prevent totalitarianism. This led to an embrace of micro-enterprise development and then research on enterprise as a bearer of value and initiator of change. The success of Micro-enterprise development has been charted by financial statistics of pay-back rates, and many anecdotes. But research has now been done on its impact in Honduras by Ken Van der Weele, the President of Opportunity International, a major MED organization; on the factors of ethos and management which affect its sustainability in Kenya by Anne Kesterton; and its operation in Uganda by Ephraim Gensi the chairman of Ugafode, a Ugandan church-based MED organization. Osvaldo Munguia, director of Mopawi, an evangelical relief and development agency in Honduras, is researching the transition from a subsistence based economy to an enterprise based economy in the Mesquite area of Honduras. One of the current unresolved areas for further research is whether micro-enterprise-led-development can function without the presence of strong non-economic inputs into a community to address the culture of poverty.

The end to the ideological ban on religion and the focus on community participation in development has raised issues of the contribution of traditional cultures and religions to development. Dr Bambang Budijanto, now Asian director of Compassion, examined the role of Christian, Islam and Hindu faith in contributing to development in Java. There is still research to be done on the role of the religious poor in their own

development; on the extent to which human rights can be a basis for development and on what basis human rights can be advanced.

Pentecostal movement

The major Christian movement among the poor in the twentieth century, and indeed the major social movement in the world in the twentieth century was the growth of the Pentecostal movement. Mainstream churches have for many years suggested that their theology and practice is other-worldly, personalistic and lacks a social theology: a classic example of the Christian faith being an opiate of the people. Douglas Petersen, one time area director for Central America of the Division of Foreign Missions of the Assemblies of God conducted research into Pentecostals in Central America and discovered that, while they may not have a social theology, Pentecostal churches are a social theology by giving people identity and a role to contribute to their communities.¹⁷ Joseph Suico, a pastor of a slum community church in the Philippines, pursued similar research in the Philippines, comparing the social role of the Pentecostal churches with that of Roman Catholic Churches in the same area. He discovered that there was no difference at all in the actual social practice of these two denominations. However, when it was noted that the Roman Catholic Church had an international resource of Catholic teaching and action to guide the congregation, and

the Pentecostals had to develop their own involvement and rationale for themselves, it becomes clear that the Pentecostal faith had actually empowered its adherents to develop their own theology, motivation and direction for community engagement. Israel Ortiz is currently completing research on Pentecostal social engagement in Guatemala.

The social involvement of evangelicals in Peru was studied by Dario Lopez. In research conducted in Spanish he examined the theological contribution made by the National Evangelical Council of Peru to the development of an understanding of human rights from a focus on religious freedom to include political involvement in engagement with the issues raised by the Shining Path guerrilla movement.

Moo Youl Choi, a pastor from Korea, examined the charge that evangelical churches in Korea were uninvolved in social ministries. He looked at churches across the theological spectrum, and discovered that those that focused on evangelism were more deeply involved in social concern for the lives of people than those churches which worked on producing social statements and policies as part of their life.

The research at OCMS in the field of ministry among and with poor people has given birth in 2003 to the Institute for Development Research which will do research on the nature, means and impact of holistic transformational development based on a biblical understanding of Christian faith.¹⁸

¹⁷ Douglas Petersen, *Not by Might nor By Power: A Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern in Latin America* (Oxford: Regnum, 1996).

¹⁸ See the website for the Institute for Development Research on the OCMS website www.ocms.ac.uk

The importance of research for mission leadership

What is remarkable about this survey of research and study on mission practice is that, while the various examples form a cohesive whole, the topics were selected individually by the researchers themselves, arising out of the pressing local issues for their ministry. Thus, the very contexts of ministry have shown that issues of leadership and the nature of holistic ministry among the poor in religious contexts are urgent matters for Christian study and reflection. This survey also shows that mission can benefit from the discipline and the studies of the academy in order to understand itself, relate itself to the rest of human activity, and based on tested results engage in fruitful strategic planning.

Research can dispel myths that surround Christian mission and imprison the minds of Christian leaders. For example, it is simply not true that Pentecostals are not socially involved—rather the research has shown that our definitions of social involvement have been shaped by particular cultural and political notions which have prevented us from seeing the way the gospel brings identity and empowerment to marginalized people. Similarly, it is not true that education of poor Christians makes no contribution to developing leadership for the church—instead, the research has shown that Christian education targeted to the elites will be subverted to entrench their own power, while among the poor it is welcomed as part of their liberation and a resource for them to contribute to the church. Again, it is not true that there is no continuity between Christian religious

experience and religious experience in some other faith traditions—it is clear from research that we have often limited the scope of divine engagement with people's lives prior to their entry into the Christian community.

Researchers are often asked in what field their research lies. 'Mission studies' relates to all the issues that are raised by the church's engagement with the world in pursuit of its mission to proclaim and express the kingdom of God. These will often involve 'trans-disciplinary' studies—in other words, taking the insights of one discipline and making an original contribution to another discipline in the light of these insights. It must be clear in which discipline the original contribution is being made. However, the notion of 'Iron Curtains' between different disciplines is one which 'mission studies' firmly rejects, not least because it refuses to be isolated into a marginal discipline itself.

The record of the last twenty years shows that at the time of writing, 100% of those who have undertaken research in this way through OCMS are still engaged in the area in which their research was undertaken. The usual result for universities in the United Kingdom is that only 40% of research graduates ever continue work in the field of their research. Further, all those who have completed research at OCMS have returned to continue in their context of mission and are giving significant creative leadership. Over one third of all the research produced has been published, mostly in the countries which are the subject of the research. Thus both the researchers and the fruits of their research are available to

churches and Christians in the countries involved.

In an important way this research process represents the democratization and de-Brahminisation of academic study. In India the Brahmins keep religious knowledge to themselves and use it as the basis of their power. This restriction is no preserve of the Brahmins—it is part of fallen human nature expressed in the religious sphere. Christians are not exempt from its temptations. The possession of a research degree, the status it confers and the knowledge that is gained is in some contexts a path to advancement and a basis for exercising power. The actual content of the research and the knowledge gained is rarely shared.

Locating Christian research in the context of the growing churches where mission is being done, making the subject matter of research the issues that are raised in the challenges of mission to surrounding cultures and of surrounding cultures to mission, and publishing the results of the research so that it is available and current for the churches are all processes that need to be intentional if the church is to benefit from research done on Christian mission.

Much research is being done on Christian mission, often by non-Christians who have discovered that Christian mission is often the best source for records of the past. However, as in the case of a recent study of the church in Africa, these studies are often undertaken to prove points against Christian mission. Some are based on assumptions that cultures should be left independent of outside influences, or that Christian mission is necessarily a western faith. Christians cannot

leave the field empty of its own scholars.

Preachers can make easy points about Ph.Ds standing for ‘permanent head damage’ and about the irrelevance of much theological education. Some of these throw-away remarks may contain elements of truth, but much more importantly, they are part of a common discourse that marginalizes the role of study in effective Christian mission. As the Archbishop of Canterbury pointed out in a lecture at Oxford University in 2002, the very notion of universities was founded in the Christian understanding that there needed to be discipleship of the mind.

If the brightest and best are convinced that academic research is irrelevant for mission, and if leaders of churches and organizations think that the findings of research are irrelevant to their own planning for mission effectiveness, then we will raise a generation of Christian leaders who will always be subject to the trends set by others. They will be good managers of processes and strategies that have been inherited from their forbears or from outside agencies. They will be markets for the latest ‘how-to’ strategy from those cultures that promote success. However, they will not be in a position to make their own contribution to theological development and mission strategy based on their own tested knowledge of their cultures, or of the gospel, or of mission practice. They will not be transformational leaders able to impart and sustain a vision of where the church needs to go in its mission and ministry in their contexts.

Furthermore, the current international climate for Christian involve-

ment in communities is set by President George Bush and his commitment to supporting the contribution of Faith Based Organisations. It is also influenced by the research of the World Bank which showed that Faith Based Organisations make a significant contribution in poor communities; for example, churches in Africa are in contact with 90% of the poor, while NGOs are in contact with only 30%.¹⁹

However, a backlash against this has already begun. It has been suggested that it is inappropriate that government funds should be made available to support the work of particular religious groups. Major organizations such as Tear Fund and World Vision have had their support from government funds questioned on this basis. It is therefore most important that significant research be done by Christians into the impact and effect of faith based organizations²⁰ in order to combat the challenge of secular fundamentalism to the legitimacy of Christian organizations receiving public funds. What such secular fundamentalism is suggesting is that care for humanity can and even should be divorced from religious convictions. This notion must be resisted.

¹⁹ See Deryke Belshaw, Robert Calderisi and Chris Sugden (eds.) *Faith in Development, partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa* (Oxford/Washington: World Bank/Regnum 2001), pp. 9, 45, 46.

²⁰ For example, C. B. Samuel, the former director of EFICOR India, suggests that 80% of all care for children at risk in India is undertaken by Christians who form less than 3% of the population.

Research based on mission practice

The library and the doctoral programme are not the only locations for Christian research. As OCMS' partnership with a number of Christian training organizations developed, a further gap in theological education was identified. There appeared to be little opportunity for Christian professionals engaged in ministries of development, or communication or similar practical ministries to develop their skills or explore what it meant to serve as Christians in these fields. Accordingly, a process was begun to develop courses that enabled practitioners with experience in these fields to undertake full-time or part-time study which combined the development of technical expertise with engagement with biblical resources to develop an understanding of the Christian contribution to the field. These courses at MA level in development have been offered in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Tanzania in partnership with World Vision; in India in Pastoral Theology in partnership with TAFTEE, and they are being developed for launch in the Middle East in 2004 in the field of Communication Practice. In these courses produced in East Africa, for example, forty dissertations were based on field experience—they covered topics such as African Perspectives on the Rights of Children and their theological significance;²¹ Female Genital Mutilation and its effects on the education and advance-

²¹ By David Mwesigwa Ntulume.

ment of Christian Maasai Girls.²² Similar field-based MA courses are offered by a consortium of the Akrofi-Krystalter Memorial Centre, Ghana, St Andrews Kabare Kenya and The Evangelical House of Studies at the University of Natal, South Africa on African Theology; and at the Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia at Trinity College Singapore on Christianity in Asia.

A most creative development has been the start of a part-time course in HIV/AIDS pastoral care. This is being piloted at St Paul's Theological College, Limuru, Kenya in a joint partnership between the college, Medical Assistance Programme (MAP) International and OCMS. People involved in HIV/AIDS ministry are studying by distance methods at Master's level, examining the medical, social, cultural, pastoral and theological dimensions of providing pastoral care for those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. Each of the twenty-five participants, who include a bishop and the wife of a church moderator, has to recruit and train twenty other people in a local group. These local groups are made up of people in direct contact with at least twenty people who are infected, affected or at risk of HIV/AIDS—for example sufferers, orphans and teenagers at risk. Thus this programme engages with ten thousand people infected, affected or at risk from HIV/AIDS. Part of the study is to research the incidence of AIDS in a particular community, and also to develop and draw on theological resources to address the cultural and

pastoral issues that are raised.

Mission research, theology and worship.

Lamin Sanneh has observed²³ that such studies are not speculation that has no root or grounding in life as it is lived. Rather the tools of study are brought to bear on Christian life and experience so that Christian practice is illuminated. Thus there is a rootedness to study and reflection. People in many different cultures are challenged by the one gospel to engage their varied experience in the light of the Word of God. This process reveals the depths of the riches of God's blessings, the rainbow colours of his love.

The research process also clearly indicates that the gospel and its mission are not matters of private feelings or preference. The gospel and its proclamation are public, conducted in the public realm, open to public inspection and subject to the normal rules of public evidence. The gospel is shown by such studies to build and nurture community and to be good news for the poor. So the gospel is shown to be God's grace to the poor and reveals divine benevolence. The work of theology is therefore to a certain extent an act of worship, since it is part of our discovery, exploration and response to the work of God's amazing grace.

This essay has traced the development of evangelical theology by those who engaged the biblical resources with the challenges of ministry among and with the poor. They discovered

22 By Simeon Oli Masi.

23 In private conversation with the author, December 2003.

resources in the Bible to express mission as transformation of all our relationships so that God's will shall be done in society and his love be experienced by all communities, especially the poor; to see the Holy Spirit as empowering people in their life in society; to see the calling to be sons and daughters of God through Christ as giv-

ing people a new identity; to look for the work of God in people's cultures and contexts prior to Christian mission. Such developments have come as those engaged in mission have brought their questions from mission to the scrutiny of both the Bible and the academy.

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Theology, Culture, Ministry and the Mission of the Church

John P. Davis

KEY WORDS: *Hermeneutics, Christology, Trinity, love, grace, community, postmodern.*

As we set out to discuss the relationship of theology, culture, and ministry to the mission of the church, the first question to be decided is, What is 'the mission of the church'? I suggest that the mission of the church is *to catalyze the creation of new communities that worship Jesus Christ as Lord*. Achieving this mission requires the interplay of theology, culture, and ministry. This paper attempts to further define that interplay.

The aforementioned description of the mission of the church implies the three areas of discussion stated in the title of this paper. 'Ministry' relates to *catalyzing* the creation of new communities that worship Jesus Christ as Lord. 'Culture' refers to both the *new communities* that are created as well as the adjacent 'old' communities. 'Theology' expands upon the confession that *Jesus Christ is Lord*.

In this paper I will explain the dynamic relationship that exists between theology, culture, and min-

istry. I use the term 'dynamic', in contrast to 'static', because theology, culture, and ministry are always in flux. The fact that they are ever changing indicates their vitality and the need to continually give each of them fresh attention.

The interplay between theology, culture, and ministry is so dynamic that it is impossible to determine whether one precedes the other. Do we start with theology, culture, or ministry? My fundamentalist upbringing, my training in presuppositionalism, and my Enlightenment approach to theology all beckon me to say that we must start with theology. Formerly, another way of saying it would have been that *good ministry flows out of good theology that has evaluated existing culture and developed a new culture with a biblical standard*. On the surface this sounds correct and evangelical. However, the relationship between theology, culture, and ministry is actually more complicated than it first appears to be. Recent discussions in hermeneutics and the influence of postmodernism challenge us to think dynamically about the interplay of theology, culture, and mission.

The Relationship of Theology to the Mission of the Church

Of course, good theology should at least be theology that affirms what the Bible teaches about God. However, theology goes beyond that. Theology '... explores the world-constructing, knowledge-forming, identity-forming, "language" of the Christian community'.¹ Theology is faith, seeking understanding.

We have become more aware in postmodern times that no one understands theology and expresses theology as a neutral interpreter. We interpret through lenses that have been culturally formed so that our theological affirmations reflect the influence of our culture. This is not to say that there is no theology apart from my cultural understanding of it, but that the only theology I know and can express is theology that is seen through my cultural lenses.

My cultural lens may be highly personal and individualized, leading to a 'private' affirmation of theology. Also, my cultural lens may be the secular culture that dominates my particular society, leading to theology held captive by secular culture. Additionally, my cultural lens may be the Christian community that, though it may serve as a checkpoint against personalized and secularized theology, yet reflects the culture of my particular Christian community.

In reality, all theological affirmations reflect a combination of the above influences. Our desire in developing

theology, however, is to be self-conscious of these influences and to work back and forth between the text, culture, and ministry, refining our theological affirmations along the way.

In my understanding, the primary theological affirmation of the church is that 'Jesus Christ is Lord' (Mt. 16:16; Acts 2:36; 1 Cor. 3:11). If the mission of the church is to worship Jesus Christ as Lord and if the heart of theology is the affirmation that Jesus Christ is Lord, then faith should pursue the understanding of that affirmation.

This pursuit of understanding that Jesus Christ is Lord requires our interaction with Scripture, culture, and ministry. As we look at Scripture we must consider how that affirmation is understood through Jesus Christ's relationship within the Trinity. Our cultural perspective helps us to appreciate the community that exists within the Trinity. Our ministry focus encourages us to present Jesus Christ as Lord in way that highlights his rule of love.

Christ's relationship within the Triune God is characterized by love, not dominance. Though we speak of something like an 'economic Trinity', in which coheres a degree of hierarchy, we also understand that love, not dominance, governs that relationship.

Perhaps a good way to understand Christ's relationship within the Trinity is to listen to his Father's words to him in Mark 1:10-11:

As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'

1 Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 53.

In these words the Father declares that Christ is his son, that he loves Christ, and that he is well pleased with Christ. These words to Jesus touch on three questions that people are asking in the 21st century—Who am I? Does any one care about me? Does my work matter? These questions relate to the human quest for identity, community, and significance.

Identity—You are my Son

The words *You are my Son* are best understood in light of the Old Testament background. From that background we understand two things about the identity of Christ.

Sonship is a declaration of Christ's deity.

Isaiah 9:6 sets forth the expectation that the Messiah would be one who is Mighty God, a child born, and a son given. Though we need the revelation of the Incarnation in the NT to explain this to us, there is a clearly an OT background for the relationship of Sonship and deity. Isaiah's contemporary, Micah, also foresaw the same event.

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times (Micah 5:2).

Sonship is a declaration of his sovereignty.

Consider Psalm 2:7 for a moment:

I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, 'You are my

Son; today I have become your Father.'

Historically this Psalm was associated with the coronation of the king of Israel. The kings of Israel stood in a special relationship with God. In some sense the king was God's son ruling on God's behalf. The Israelite monarchy was also a theocracy over which God directly ruled through the human king.

Ultimately, Psalm 2 anticipated a Son of David who would also be God and who would rule the nations with absolute sovereignty. The words, 'this is my Son', should be understood as God's declaration that Jesus is the Son who will be Sovereign King.

In Peter's message in Acts 2, he interprets the statement—*You are my Son; today I have become your Father*. From Peter's words we understand that it is actually at the resurrection of Jesus Christ that he is invested with royalty and enters the royal privilege of Sonship, as ruler of the universe. Just as the OT Hebrew King was invested with royalty at his coronation and became in one sense 'the son of God', the resurrection was the day when Christ's humanity was invested with royal glory. On that day, he rose above the weakness and limitations of his humanity and ascended to his throne, as son of David and Son of God. The Father affirms the identity of the Son as one who is both God and Sovereign Lord.

Community—I love you

Furthermore, in Mark 1:10-11 the Father also says to Christ, *I love you*. In these words he expresses his affection for the Son and in so doing he allows us

to see the community that exists in the Trinity.

Jesus eternally experienced the special love of the Father. We are repeatedly told in the Bible that God is love (1 John 4:8). Of course, God is more than love, but love is an attribute of God that frequently comes to the forefront in Scripture. It is from this attribute of love that God expresses himself toward others in many different ways—goodness, grace, mercy, long-suffering, kindness, and so on. Certain of those expressions of love (like mercy and long-suffering), were not necessary before sin entered the world. But the love of God is so rich and pure that its capacity is never thwarted nor diminished by any situation.

Love also assumes a recipient of love. Though this is not necessarily a proof of the Trinity, we can deduce from the fact that God is love that there must have been recipients of love before creation. We do know from Scripture that there was an ‘intra-Trinitarian’ expression of love.

Jesus speaks very clearly of this ‘intra-Trinitarian’ love of eternity in John 17:20-27. Verses 23-25 clearly express the reality, eternity, and continuity of the love of the Father for his Son.

May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me **and have loved them even as you have loved me**. ‘Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me **because you loved me before the creation of the world**. ‘Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they

know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order **that the love you have for me** may be in them and that I myself may be in them.’

We have the privilege of hearing through Scripture the Father say to the Son, ‘You are my beloved’. Actually this is more than just, ‘I love you’. These words indicate the special and unique relationship that the Son has with the Father. He is the ‘only begotten’ Son as the older versions say. He stands in a unique relationship. Though many will be born again into God’s family who become sons and daughters, there will always only be one who is called—*the Son of God*. Clearly, we see in the Father’s relationship to the Son, not only that identity is important, but that community is also.

Significance—I am well pleased with you

The Father also says to Jesus, *with you I am well pleased*. These are words of approval without qualification. They declare the value and significance of the ministry and work of Jesus Christ. We can set these words about Jesus in contrast to what the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 14:2-3:

The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

This is the way it was until Jesus walked the earth. What God saw in

Jesus and says about Jesus is what he had intended for all humanity. Jesus has just been baptized at the hand of John the Baptist. His baptism showed his humility. His baptism showed his obedience (Mt. 3:15—'to fulfil all righteousness'). His baptism showed his identity with fallen humanity. His baptism was the first public step on the road that eventually led Christ to the cross.

Jesus begins his public ministry with these words from his Father—*I am pleased with you*. Throughout his life and ministry God would continue to attest and confirm that he was pleased with Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's ultimate stamp of approval on the work of Christ. After Jesus died to redeem sinful humanity, his Father delivered him from the grave and exalted him as King over all. The Father declares that Jesus' life and work were significant. He is well pleased with Jesus.

These three statements in Mark 1:10-11 help us to form a structural motif for understanding Jesus Christ as Lord. His lordship flows out of a familial relationship, which provides identity (*you are my son*); out of an affectionate relationship, which offers community (*I love you*); and out of an affirmative, yet evaluative relationship, which declares significance (*I am well pleased with you*).

The lordship of Christ is not monarchical in the sense that he rules over us as a king rules his subjects. The lordship of Christ is familial. He rules over his church as an elder brother might rule over his younger brothers. His rule is a rule of love rather than simply an exercise of absolute power. He rules in the context of our community with him.

His rule does not seek personal affirmation through the display of his power, but rather is peacefully grounded in knowing that his Father affirms him. His lordship lays a foundation for our significance.

Understanding the lordship of Christ in this way coincides with Stanley Grenz's suggestion that our theological development should be post-individualistic, i.e. theology based on a communitarian approach; post-rationalistic, i.e. a theology that focuses more on the experience of Christianity; post-dualistic, i.e. a theology that integrates the mind, body, and emotions; and post-noeticentric, i.e. a theology that does not isolate the head from the heart.²

Furthermore, these three statements that the Father makes to the Son set the stage for understanding the relationship of human culture to the mission of the church.

The Relationship of Culture to the Mission of the Church

In many ways human cultures give evidence of a propensity toward identity, a desire for community, and a cry for significance. One consequence of modernity was to by-pass these elements. In this regard Millard Erickson refers to Thomas Oden, who views modernity as coming to an inevitable cataclysmic end, and speaks of the four fallen idols of modernity: autonomous individualism, narcissistic hedonism, reductive naturalism, and absolute

² Millard J. Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), pp. 93-97.

moral relativism.³ These four fallen idols were in direct contrast to humanity's created need for identity, community, and significance. In many ways the 'old church' failed to catalyze a *new community* that modelled these values.

Middleton and Walsh inform us that the modern man's sense of identity was in himself.

No longer dependent on the superstitions of the past or the Bible as an external source of authoritative revelation, modern man champions his secular independence. Free from the control of ecclesiastical authority and the imposition of identity by a rigid medieval social order, the modern person is found to be a self-made subject.⁴

In the modern era humankind failed to achieve the identity for which it sought, as Middleton and Walsh point out.

... it is clear in a postmodern world; this autonomous self is effectively dismantled. We need to acknowledge that the autonomous self is a construct of a particular culture. Moreover, we need to admit that this way of answering the Who are we? question has proven to be a violent and oppressive disaster. And we might well join our voice with postmodernity and say good riddance to the humanist view of the self.⁵

The failure of modernity to satisfy the quest for identity does not negate the reality of that quest. Postmodernity continues the pursuit, only now the definition of self is de-centered. One's identity is seen now as socially constructed. There is no all-encompassing identity for humanity nor is there a stable identity for anyone in particular. One derives one's identity from the culture/community in which one is.

Though we may disagree with the view that there is no universal identity and with the possibility of an ever-changing socially constructed identity, we find more in common with postmodernism than with modernism. The quest for identity is still present. The idea that identity is established in community is more in tune with the biblical concept that identity is formed through one's relationship with God and with others.

We listen intently to and somewhat agree with the warning of Flett that

...culture has the capacity to circumscribe our thoughts and to restrict the possibility of change. In other words, our post-Christian culture has the potential to prevent Christians from thinking, and hence acting, as Christians. And the more our culture relinquishes its Christendom heritage the truer this becomes.⁶

However, on the other hand, we recognize that the ongoing work of God's common grace in human culture

3 Erickson, *Postmodernizing*, pp. 51-52.

4 Richard J. Middleton, and Brian T. Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used To Be* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1995), p. 49.

5 Middleton and Walsh, *Truth is Stranger*, p. 51.

6 John Flett, *Unpacking Gospel and Culture, Collision Crossroads* (Auckland: The Deep Sight Trust, 1998), pp. 8-14.

makes it possible that culture may challenge us to think more biblically. This is one effect of postmodernism. As we observe the quest for identity in community, we are challenged to be that *new community* that can help others find their identity in the love of God and the love of those who worship Jesus Christ as Lord.

Additionally, our culture seeks a sense of significance. Though the idea of a metanarrative is rejected, the desire for being part of a 'story of life' yet persists. 'Where do I fit?' and 'does my life matter?' are still questions being asked, even though Postmoderns have lost trust in totalizing stories. Humans give evidence of their need of story as they continue to ask questions regarding the existence of evil and suffering. These questions cause us to contextualize our theological expressions and to share the biblical metanarrative in such a way that postmoderns see that Scripture '... contains the resources to shatter totalizing readings, to convert the reader, to align us with God's purposes of shalom, compassion, and justice'.⁷

The Relationship of Ministry to the Mission of the Church

Ministry is an outworking of theology and culture as much as it is an impetus for the developing of theology and culture. One key to doing ministry in a postmodern world is creating *new communities* that communicate the biblical metanarrative in terms that affirm the

human quest for identify, community, and significance. Perhaps this is best accomplished through a ministry that is well-grounded in biblical theology⁸ and that remains informed about contemporary culture. This means that we will be able to see the truth and goodness in postmodernism which includes, as McLaren points out, an appropriate humility, a healthy scepticism, a thirst for spirituality, an openness to faith, a congenial tolerance, and a limited relativism.⁹

Another key would be developing *new communities* that focus more on the communal understanding of worshipping Jesus Christ as Lord. This begins with something as simple as how we read Scripture. As Rodney Klapp comments: 'To read the Bible apart from community amounts to no less than each reader aspiring to his or her own religion.'¹⁰ This also includes an understanding of '... life in the church as a kind of resocialization, an enculturation according to the standards of the kingdom of God rather than the world'.¹¹

Another key to ministry will be the humility and teachability of the new community. Because the New World in

⁸ 'Biblical Theology is the branch of Exegetical Theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible.' Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, reprint 1996), p. 5.

⁹ Brian D. McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), pp. 173-175.

¹⁰ Rodney Klapp, *A Peculiar People* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), p. 130.

¹¹ Klapp, *A Peculiar People*, p. 99.

⁷ Middleton and Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used To Be*, p. 107.

which we live is suspicious about claims to certainty and objective truth, a greater degree of humility is needed in communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ. Brian McLaren insightfully describes this necessary disposition.

As we move to the other side, our greatest enemy will not be our ignorance; it will be our unteachability. It won't be what we don't know that threatens us; it will be what we do know. We know too much—so much that we can't learn how much we need to learn.¹²

Ministry in a postmodern world requires more humility about our theological certainties. Humility does not entail the diminishing of theological affirmation, but removes the arrogance and unteachability that are often associated with Christians. Along with this will come the practice of fairness where, as McLaren suggests: 'We need to be more careful about applying a degree of scrutiny to others ... that we cannot ourselves withstand.'¹³

The New Community

At the outset of this discussion I commented that the mission of the church is to catalyze the creation of new communities that worship Jesus Christ as Lord and that achieving this mission requires the interplay of theology, culture, and ministry. The mission of the church requires this interplay because we 'witness to the truth of Christ in a culture that has lost sight of its foundations'.¹⁴ I conclude with these challenging words from John Flett:

We may feel tempted to cling on to what is left of Christendom but this can only lead to the continuing irrelevance of Christian truth. Instead we must face the stark reality of our current social situation and realize that we live in a New World, one that has certain challenges we must face but also great opportunity. [Our] ...apostolate is to help establish the truth of God's Kingdom within the social reality of modern Western culture....¹⁵

¹² McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, pp. 38-39.

¹³ McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, p. 176.

¹⁴ John Flett, *Unpacking Gospel and Culture*, pp. 8-14.

¹⁵ Flett, *Unpacking Gospel and Culture*, pp. 8-14.

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Church and Mission: Decolonizing the Mind

Thomas J. Kopp

KEYWORDS: *Autonomy, relationships, partnership, evangelical ecumenism, politics, social issues*

Moving into the 21st century

While this article bases its suggestions on the study of a specific old and important South African mission society, as well as a younger church, the suggestions made carry implications for all existing mission societies and their daughter churches worldwide.

Most mission agencies and national churches have made no endeavour to gloss over the fact that each is imperfect. Both groups have recognized weaknesses and shortcomings and yet, more often than not, they are more similar than dissimilar in terms of ministry goals and values.

Now that both have entered the new century, and work together in a 'new South Africa', ministry strategies need to be either introduced or strengthened to propel the Mission and the Church in certain new directions. This can be done effectively, however, only after taking into consideration the world-

wide debate concerning mission/church relationships. While it is not the purpose of this article to undertake an extensive analysis of this debate, a very broad outline of it will be helpful at this point.

The debate, as would be expected, is approached from different angles and perspectives determined by ecclesiastical associations, theological persuasions, stages of church life and development, and whether or not the proponent represents the Mission or the Church.

Following the second World War, as more and more countries gained their independence from colonial powers, so too, young churches began to receive more autonomy from their parent mission organizations. While some gained it too early perhaps and others gained it rather late, all faced new tensions in their mission/church relationships. Eventually, the tensions built to the extent that a moratorium was called on missions, largely by 'those Third World churches affiliated with the World Council of Churches; in Roman

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Catholic and conservative-evangelical churches, moratorium does not appear to be so much of an issue.¹ When first used, moratorium meant that western missionary involvement should be deferred for a limited time of five years but John Gatu later 'changed that to "Missionaries should be withdrawn. Period"'.²

During the 1900s particularly, a great deal of thought and discussion has gone into the ideas originally proposed by 'Henry Venn (1796-1873)...and Rufus Anderson (1796-1880)...[who] wrote about the necessity of planting "three-self" churches—churches that would be self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating (Venn used the term "self-extending")'.³ Missions and churches have wrestled with how the three-self formula should be worked out in practice, as well as what conditions would be needed for missions to move from the parent stage to the partner stage. A great amount of lip service has been paid to the idea of partnership between missions and their daughter churches, but it has been quite a different matter to undertake effectively. As the old saying goes, 'When all is said and done, more has been said than done!' This is particularly the case when such

divergent ideas exist of what partnership really entails.

The two essential issues around which the debate revolves at present are mutuality and interdependence. David Bosch referred to what he termed the 'Constantinian dispensation',⁴ due to which mission agencies remain in their parental roles, finding it difficult to release hold on control and power—especially because they provide the large portion of the finances, personnel, and skills needed for the developing church. The challenge, as the Bangkok conference expressed it, is 'to relate to one another in a way which does not dehumanize'.⁵

For true mutuality to take place between the Mission and the Church, there has to be a genuine give-and-take from both sides. The Church needs to be heard and taken seriously by the Mission, and the Mission will need to take considerable initiative to see that it happens. Both the Mission and the Church (but particularly the Mission) will need to bear in mind the two most common models used in approaching partnership, consciously moving from the 'business' model to the 'family' model.

The business model views people as stockholders, while the family model sees them as members. Control in the business model is maintained with money, but in the family it is relationships that keep control. In the business model the emphasis is on activities, while the family model values fellowship.

1 David J. Bosch, 'Towards True Mutuality: Exchanging the Same Commodities or Supplementing Each Other's Needs?' *Missiology: An International Review*, VI (3 July 1978), p. 283.

2 Bosch, 'Towards True Mutuality', p. 287.

3 John Mark Terry, 'Indigenous Churches', in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau, Harold Netland and Charles Van Engen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), p. 483.

4 Bosch, 'Towards True Mutuality', p. 288.

5 Bosch, 'Towards True Mutuality', p. 291.

Contributions are seen as competitive in the business approach, but they are complementary in the family model. No contribution is devalued even though recognized as distinct. Both models will pursue accountability. However, the business model is one-sided, whereas the family model seeks a mutual accountability.⁶

David Bosch adds that ‘Genuine reciprocity can only develop where the two respective partners do *not* receive the same as they have given. In other words: does reciprocity not presuppose complementarity?’⁷

Healthy, personal, and sincere (not merely expedient) relationships are required for successful partnerships. However, various hindrances exist which deter such partnerships; these have been enumerated as ‘diverging agendas, insufficient emphasis on relationships, and the indiscriminate usage of old sponsorship methods’. These can be combated by moving from the ‘sponsorship’ model to the ‘partnership’ model, as seen in the following chart.⁸

SPONSORSHIP PARTNERSHIP

Money	Gifts
Control	Communion
Donation	Participation
Hierarchy	Equality
Imposed vision	Shared vision
Short term	Enduring
One-sided	Mutual
I—You	We
Domination	Cooperation
Dependence	Interdependence
Parent—Child	Peers
Suspicion	Trust
Unhappiness	Joy

According to Dr Robert L. Ramseyer,⁹ both those who send missionaries and those who receive them have scars of suspicion and distrust due to the underlying question, ‘Do we really believe that we are, or can be, partners?’ This results from a deep ‘consciousness of inequality’¹⁰ which keeps both mission and church groups from seeing objectively how God has gifted each. The goal would be to move toward the statement expressed in Philippians 1:3-6, which reads, ‘I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being con-

⁶ Rob Brynjolfson, ‘From Synthesis to Synergy: The Iguassu Think Tanks’, in *Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue*, ed. William D. Taylor (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), p. 482.

⁷ Bosch, ‘Towards True Mutuality’, p. 293 (Bosch’s italics).

⁸ Brynjolfson, ‘From Synthesis to Synergy’, p. 483.

⁹ Robert L. Ramseyer, ‘Partnership and Interdependence’, in *Church and Mission: Reader for MSB200-B and MSR521-X* (Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa, 1988), pp. 93-100.

¹⁰ Ramseyer, ‘Partnership and Interdependence’, p. 94.

fident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ' (NKJV).

It is with the hope that both mission agencies and national churches will move proactively, positively, and with Holy Spirit-led determination from the sponsorship model to the partnership model that the possible mutual contributions below are suggested.

Possible mutual contributions of both Mission and Church

There is a very real sense in which a meaningful partnership will be able to display clearly the power of the gospel. Whereas in the past, there have been clear lines of demarcation between the 'white' and the 'black,' there is no excuse for such demarcation lines to continue. 'The object of leadership is to work with your people. You don't say, "Do this." You say, "Let us do this."' ¹¹ Genuine partnership does not mean one taking over the other. Nor does it mean the Mission coming in with an attitude of superiority or the Church coming in with an attitude of inferiority. The idea is to struggle together to broaden the narrow horizons and to strengthen the vision or perspectives, which may be too short or low. 'It's not as easy as I say, but I think that can be a true, good witness to God's kingdom and the world. We need to strive for kingdom principles together, and that would mean acknowledging each other as God's agents, and finding a way to

have a common witness.'¹² To cross the lines takes courage, especially after believing and living a certain way for so long. It also takes faith, expecting God to accomplish bigger and better things through the body of believers as they work and minister together.

Engaging the new culture

The time is approaching when '...there will be no Zulu man and Sotho man. We will be just African.'¹³ Both the Mission and Church need to keep a constant 'watch on the culture of the people',¹⁴ resisting the laager¹⁵ mentality that dulls the senses and destroys vision.¹⁶ Churches need to understand the context in which they exist, and, like the Old Testament sons of Issachar (1 Chr. 12:32), understand their times and know what to do. 'The culture now in South Africa is becoming the global culture. On TV you see people from England, from America, others from Australia and China. They become a part of your life and you behave like what you have been watching. There's no specific time when we can say,

¹¹ Knox Mavimbela, Interview with author, cassette recording (Roodepoort, South Africa: 27 January 1999).

¹² Faki Bodibe, Interview with author, cassette recording (Roodepoort, South Africa: 3 February 1999).

¹³ Wilson M. Magubane, Interview with author, cassette recording (Harmelia, Germiston, South Africa: 30 January 1999).

¹⁴ Lloyd T. Magewu, Interview with author, micro-cassette recording (East London, South Africa: 19 May 1999).

¹⁵ A laager was a circle of wagons lashed together by the Afrikaner *voortrekkers* (pioneers) to form a defence against attackers.

¹⁶ Caesar Molebatsi, Interview with author, micro-cassette recording (Rosebank, South Africa: 25 May 1999).

“Now is the time we changed our teachings.” It just happens slowly.¹⁷

Mission and Church leaders need to work together to overcome their shallow theological traditions or narrow perspectives of the church and move assertively ahead to maturity. For instance, the term ‘indigenous church’ could be thought more in terms of ‘South African’ as opposed to ‘American’ rather than ‘Indian’ as opposed to ‘African’ or even ‘Zulu’ as opposed to ‘Xhosa’. The deeply ingrained habits that keep the groups separate and still distrusting of each other need to be overcome, and it will require give-and-take from all sides.

Confronting the new cults/religions

With the new freedom of religion in South Africa, many new cults have come forward and present a challenge to the churches. The churches need to be aware of what the cults teach and how to answer them biblically. Christians need to stand up for what they believe. The aim, of course, would be that the evangelical wing of the church would become stronger rather than merely developing an interfaith system (which is now strongly emphasized because of the influence of human rights and the new tolerance of religion). The issue of whether Jesus is the only Saviour of the world, which has been a world missiological issue for a long time, is now very much a South

African issue as well. ‘So it’s time for us [i.e., evangelicals] now to really shine, and not merely to say we are different by word, but really live it so that the credibility of Christianity could be seen beyond any shadow of doubt. The answer for the world is in the church, but the church is [just] sitting!’¹⁸

Moving beyond the ‘problems’

Rather than dwelling on the negatives of the past, it is imperative that together the national and expatriate church workers establish a let’s-go-and-build-together attitude for the good of the church as a whole, recognizing that they are here to positively benefit the growth of the body of Christ.

Neither the Mission nor the Church will gain anything by repeatedly laying the blame at each other’s door for either past or present situations. Each needs to take its own responsibility now and move forward. Dwelling on the difficulties or misunderstandings of the past will only give bitterness an opportunity to spring up and cause trouble (Heb. 12:15). Now is the time to turn over a new leaf, begin a new chapter, and start a new heritage! ‘If you never move on from your problem, people are going to remember you for the problem and not for the things you could have done. There is the example of Judas and Peter. Peter did exactly what Judas did, three times. Peter managed to move on. Judas couldn’t.

¹⁷ Thembinkosi Ntongana, Interview with author, cassette recording (Hilton, South Africa: 9 February 1999).

¹⁸ Aiken Zondo, Interview with author, cassette recording (Durban, South Africa: 10 February 1999).

So what will we remember Judas for? Betraying Christ. What do you remember Peter for? For his Pentecostal sermon.¹⁹

Encouraging and participating in evangelical ecumenism

Related to the previous two recommendations is the matter of cooperation with other churches. Many of the more conservative Missions have policies similar to that of the former Africa Evangelical Fellowship.

Every Missionary shall exercise Christian love towards every other member of the Body of Christ. Fellowship and co-operation are encouraged with those who hold beliefs that are in agreement with the Fellowship's Basis of Faith, but there shall be no co-operation in spiritual ministries with those who are not in agreement with such. The Fellowship rejects the extreme separatism which withholds fellowship and co-operation on the basis of 'secondary association'.²⁰

The limits of cooperation stated above were no doubt associated with the fear that relating to other organizations, churches, and agencies which were not doctrinally similar would lead to the loss of the Mission's commitment to mission and evangelism.

As Pierson points out, when the

International Missionary Council became a part of the WCC [World Council of Churches] in 1961 'some hoped it would place mission at the heart of the Council. Others feared the move would result in a decline in mission. The latter proved to be right as a combination of theological liberalism, which seemed to doubt the importance of evangelism and maintained a primary focus on social issues, led to a great decrease in missionary activity by most conciliar churches in Europe and North America. Thus the WCC has not succeeded in fulfilling the goal of its early proponents, unity so that the world might believe.'²¹

The position of the Africa Evangelical Church, founded by the Africa Evangelical Fellowship, is more nebulous. Its most recent constitution²² states that its regional offices will function as liaisons between their 'regions and the following bodies: the Church Board, the Africa Evangelical Fellowship Field Headquarters, Government bodies, local authorities and any agencies within their respective regions; as well as between each region and the other two regions of the Africa Evangelical Church'.

By virtue of the facts that both the AEF and the AEC had little or no involvement in the events surrounding the drafting of certain key declarations

¹⁹ Caesar Molebatsi, Interview with author, micro-cassette recording (Rosebank, South Africa: 25 May 1999).

²⁰ Africa Evangelical Fellowship, *Fellowship Manual* (Newbury, England: AEF International, 1996), p. 42.

²¹ Paul E. Pierson, 'Ecumenical Movement', *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, pp. 300-303.

²² Africa Evangelical Church, *The Constitution of the Africa Evangelical Church* (South Africa: Africa Evangelical Church, 1994), Clause IV: Administration, C.6.b.

including the Kairos Document,²³ the SACEL Charter,²⁴ the EWISA Document,²⁵ and the Rustenburg Declaration,²⁶ and have had little involvement with the Association of Evangelicals of South Africa, it is clear that coopera-

tive efforts with other churches were a low priority.

Even after the above-mentioned documents were drafted, neither the AEF nor the AEC, like many other conservative groups, officially studied or interacted with them. In fact, many of their members were, and still are, unaware of them. Excluding national or international cooperation, there has been little evidence of cooperation at the local church level. To narrow it down further still, there is not the interaction and cooperation that there could be due to the internal prejudices which exist. Unfortunately, the South African churches are not exempt and noticeable discriminations exist among the churches. These are due to several factors.

Firstly, ethnic prejudices are one cause. Occasionally, for example, church members complain that the Zulus or the Swazis dominate them.

Second, there are geographical prejudices that lead to misunderstandings and consistent friction as the needs, perspectives, orientation, and values differ between the provinces as well as between the urban and rural churches. The 'ragged rural mentality which gives blind allegiance to missionaries', as opposed to the 'maverick urban mentality, which has nothing to do with missionaries' are considered two general categorizations of African pastors. Over the past years, however, certain leaders have attempted to accommodate everybody whose evangelical stand is correct, even though they may disagree politically, ethnically, or by trade union membership. The aim has been not to let those things divide but, rather, to emphasize the very real unity which comes by being one in Christ.

23 The Kairos Document was issued in September 1985 and was written primarily by a group of black South African pastors and theologians, addressing themes such as violence, suffering, law, justice, liberty and reconciliation from the perspectives of what was called State Theology, Church Theology, and Prophetic Theology. It called on Christians everywhere to stand with South African Christians in scriptural reflection at that *kairos*, that time of truth, as they wrestled with the issues confronting them.

24 The SACEL Charter was *A Charter for Mobilising Evangelical Unity* and was produced in February 1986 by the South African Conference of Evangelical Leaders (SACEL). Its purpose was to ascertain and express the mind of South Africa's evangelicals concerning their perspectives and what courses of action should be taken in the face of the country's racial tensions.

25 The Evangelical Witness in South Africa (EWISA) Document, issued in July 1986, was a compilation of papers that had been presented by predominantly African theologians to various evangelical churches. Their aim was to help the believers grapple with how to align their lives, their faith, and their ministries with the violence that rocked the country, and to become an active voice of conscience to the government.

26 Compiled in November 1990 by the National Conference of Churches in South Africa, the Rustenburg Declaration unequivocally rejected apartheid as sin, and drew attention to the insufficiency of preaching individual salvation without addressing social transformation. It sought to renew commitment to action on the part of all South Africans, but particularly the church, to set right the wrongs related to land ownership, education, employment, health services, and women's rights.

Third, academic prejudices and biases exist in terms of where national pastors receive their training. For instance, some have claimed that 'godly' pastors are trained at particular institutions but 'politically and socially conscious' pastors are trained elsewhere. Additionally, it has been claimed that certain schools produce the 'intellectually quick urban' pastor while other schools produce the 'intellectually slow rural' pastor.

Political party affiliation produces a fourth prejudice. 'Political party apartheid' exists in many of the black areas, creating territorial divides and, therefore, is systematically avoided in any discussion among pastors and church leaders.

There needs to be taught a new biblical understanding of the idea of 'agreeing to disagree', otherwise churches will multiply more by division than by evangelism, a fact already true of South Africa as a whole. As Richard Elphick writes, 'Fission and competition between churches accelerated Christianization in the nineteenth century; this might be even more true in the twentieth. By the 1990s few places in the world, apart from the United States, matched South Africa in the proliferation of Christian denominations and sects—evidence that Christianity has apparently adapted to a striking variety of cultures and social classes, a reason for its dramatic advance.'²⁷ Issues of tolerance versus intolerance need to be addressed and discussed, particularly

as they apply to the church as a whole.

A lack of intergenerational understanding has widened the gap between the old and the young. Both the younger and older generations must be taught biblical perspectives on relating to each other, learning to listen to and understand the viewpoints, values, and concerns of each group. With the changes taking place in South Africa, the older generations may be very confused, puzzled or even angered by them, whereas the younger generation will be adapting to them, thus widening the gap further between the generations. In a culture where the attitude of the older generation toward the younger generation is, 'You are a child, I cannot listen to you, I cannot be told by a child' and where the attitude of the younger generation is becoming less respectful of the older generation, hearing, understanding, and ministering to the disappointments, hurts, and perspectives of everyone will begin to build necessary bridges of trust between the age groups.

All of this points to a serious deficiency that needs to be addressed as both Mission and Church move into the 21st century. 'The diversity of the world we are sent to reach will require the diversity of our cultural backgrounds and expertise. When in unity of purpose and for the glory of God we marshal together our various diverse gifts, we not only demonstrate the oneness of the body of Christ, thus enhancing the credibility of the gospel, but as the Lord said, the world shall see and believe that Jesus is the Messiah.'²⁸

²⁷ Richard Elphick & Rodney Davenport, editors, *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (Berkeley, California, USA: University of California Press, 1997), p. 7.

²⁸ Tokunboh Adeyemo, 'Profiling a Globalized and Evangelical Missiology', in *Global Missiology for the 21st Century*, p. 269.

Addressing current social and political needs

David Bosch has pointed out: 'Mission is a multifaceted ministry, in respect of witness, service, justice, healing, reconciliation, liberation, peace, evangelism, fellowship, church planting, contextualization, and much more... Our mission has to be multidimensional in order to be credible and faithful to its origins and character.'²⁹ Accordingly, church leaders, both national and expatriate, will be asked hard questions from time to time about current social and political issues. Now 'is the time to begin to systematically build... a theology... of state—not a time to shy away from it because of some mistaken belief that we have less to worry about in relation to the present state'.³⁰

Hibernating from difficult issues, or hiding behind quick answers will not equip the next generation of Christians to meet the growing demands and tensions of the new socio-political scene enveloping South Africa. Differing opinions on how to proceed are undoubtedly affected by the contemporary debate on the merits or dangers of ecumenical theology, black theology, and conservative evangelical theology. Typically for the conservative Mission or Church, De Gruchy observes, 'The gospel has nothing to do with socio-

political issues; it is acontextual, "spiritual" and a private matter. This unbiblical understanding of Christian faith derives in large measure from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment with its strong individualism and its separation of reality into the material and spiritual spheres in the interests of scientific progress.'³¹

Yet, as Professor Saayman points out, when it comes to political positioning, 'a supposed neutrality is impossible'. In fact, to take no position is indeed to take a position and, more specifically, to 'write off *this* world',³² which in the long run means either denying or avoiding an important dimension of responsible discipleship. It is important, therefore, to maintain both a biblical faithfulness and a contextual relevance in approaching the current needs. While both evangelical Mission and Church have been guilty of spiritualizing the gospel to the extent that it is regarded as having no socio-political significance, there are some changes taking place.

One mission leader and long-time resident of South Africa, stated that

...missionaries are very frightened to say anything about the new government. I have been to African conferences these days and heard

²⁹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 512.

³⁰ Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, 'Truth, National Unity and Reconciliation in South Africa: Aspects of the Emerging Theological Agenda', *Missionalia*, 25 (1 April 1997), p. 83.

³¹ John W. De Gruchy, 'Theologies in Conflict: The South African Debate', in *Resistance and Hope: South African Essays in Honour of Beyers Naudé*, ed. Charles Villavicencio and John W. De Gruchy, 1985 edn., (Cape Town, South Africa: David Philip, Publisher (Pty) Ltd, 1985), pp. 95-96.

³² Willem Saayman, *Christian Mission in South Africa: Political and Ecumenical* (Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa, 1993), p. 51.

some of their leaders stand up and speak about the way they believe the government is moving in the wrong direction with regards to education, moving in the wrong direction in terms of abortion and homosexuality and the death penalty and so on. I think this is the time when we need to allow the Church to face the government. We failed to face the government in our day and I'm surprised, pleasantly surprised, by the fact that some of them are beginning to stand up now and face their own government on some of these issues.³³

It is believed that if the church stands up against issues it cannot agree with, that if the church attends conferences on such issues which are organized by various government departments or officials, 'Then one day that government will say, "Someone can advise us. It is the evangelical church, because they've got a vision!"'³⁴

Sound theological bases must be established from which Mission and Church will operate. The policies then need to be translated into practice. Actual goals need to be specified and the whole church needs to work through the issues theologically.

However, such a shift towards understanding and addressing the

issues more overtly should never mean an abandonment of the personal salvation message of the gospel.

A fuller understanding of discipleship

At the Mission Africa 2000 conference conducted in Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa, 12-16 May 2000, Chadian Rene Daidanso ma Djongwe, associate general secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa, stated that a major problem for African church leaders is nominalism, and 'pinpointed the biggest problem as lack of discipleship'. General Secretary Tokunboh Adeyemo added, 'We—nationals and expatriates—persuade non-Christians to become Christians, we baptize them, we give them Christian names. But we have not taught them to be disciples. Out of 100 pastors, I doubt that five teach their members to be true disciples of Jesus.'³⁵

Both national and expatriate church leaders and workers must keep in mind that evangelism embraces not only church planting but discipling. Hugh Wetmore says,

the agenda for discipling is as wide as the teachings of Jesus or, can we say, as wide as the Bible. Whereas most of our evangelical discipling has been in the area of how to avoid temptation, how to grow in the Christian life through prayer and Bible reading, fellowship in the church, and occasionally the tithing aspect will be drummed in if the

³³ Rev Dr Ronald Genheimer, Interview with author, cassette recording (By telephone between Tahlequah, Oklahoma and Vancouver, Washington, USA: 19 November 1999).

³⁴ Wilson M. Magubane, Interview with author, cassette recording (Harmelia, Germiston, South Africa: 28 January 1999).

³⁵ W. Harold Fuller, 'Mission Africa 2000 Sees Hope for "Hopeless Continent"', *World Pulse* (15 September 2000), p. 7.

minister is particularly hard up. But apart from that, you don't have a broad discipling curricula, and I believe that missionaries and pastors at every level, every department, every church, need to have a broad curricula for discipling that will embrace the issues of health, economics, justice, money, and missions as well. Lots of discipling in our churches doesn't touch on missions and missions is a very important category in the discipling syllabus.³⁶

Discipleship must change the dichotomy that sees structures in society, politics, and economics as non-spiritual and structures in the church and Christian family as spiritual. *All* aspects of life are to be influenced by the discipling process, and, by and large, this is what both Missions and Churches have failed to do, particularly Missions. While missionaries seem to have had the time to establish medical clinics and educational facilities, such as technical schools and high schools, they did not take the time for the necessary grounding of believers in the Word or to prepare them for leadership.

While there is a continuing need for training in the basics—for example, how to do evangelism and how to teach—what is needed, according to one church leader, is

to train people to live the Word. The concept of Matthew 28:20, 'teaching them to do what I have commanded', I think that is where

we start. In doing that, of course, you have to ask 'What is it that the Lord taught or instructed or commanded?' He taught how to live with my neighbor. 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.' And I think in South Africa that goes a long way because of who my neighbor is. My neighbor is the Hindu, the White, the Black, and the Colored. Everybody is my neighbor. What is my attitude toward them? That's the training we need in South Africa today, and then training people in how to liberate themselves from things like poverty and unemployment, or whatever continues to help them.³⁷

A broader discipling curriculum needs to be developed at every level within the church, at the same time keeping in mind the development of the *whole* person, and not attempting to compartmentalize the spiritual from the practical or the social as a westerner would. Instead it is necessary to embrace essential issues such as health, justice, the biblical concept of what a church is supposed to be, marriage and family responsibilities, poverty, employment, principles of giving, and so on.

To do this effectively, the target audiences have to be known well. Bible School principal, Rev Albert Xaba, stated that South African believers often live in 'Christian pockets. Whereas to be effective, we've got to get in among the people that we are sent to reach, and reach them at their

³⁶ Hugh Wetmore, Interview with author, cassette recording (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: 9 February 1999).

³⁷ W. T. Albert Xaba, Interview with author, cassette recording (Hilton, South Africa: 9 February 1999).

need.' He referred to a visit by Dr Jim Pleuddemann, SIM General Director, during which 'he said, "We take the Bible and we say to the people that this is what the Bible says, so live up to this, instead of going to the people and finding out what their problems are, and then bringing them to the Bible to show them how the Bible addresses the pertinent and relevant problems." We tend to scratch them where they don't really itch. To improve our ministry, we would do well really getting to people, looking to their problems, meeting them, meeting their felt needs and then coming up with answers from the Word of God. I think that increases our effectiveness in reaching out.'³⁸

Personnel in both Mission and Church memberships would increase their effectiveness by getting among the people, knowing them, understanding them, and then bringing the Word of God and applying it to their needs. The Mission and the Church can also have a unique and powerful ministry coming alongside and encouraging those who are still struggling with deep emotional pain due to the loss of family members during the years of political turmoil. Furthermore, it is essential that this be modelled by both the Mission and the Church leadership because 'New Christian role models will have to be found, especially in the White, but also in the Black community' in order to correct the 'slanted picture of Christianity in South Africa'.³⁹

Strengthening leadership training for both missionary and national

Training institutions have a tremendous influence and need to be considered carefully. Pastors and church leaders who sense the direction of God on their lives either for urban or rural ministries need to be able to obtain training in programs that will give them appropriate tools for the contexts in which they will minister. While all pastors and church leaders need solid biblical and theological foundations, a 'rural ministry track' and an 'urban ministry track' could give specific training for urban or rural ministry contexts that would cover appropriate areas of social, political, and economic concerns, styles of leadership, and cultural peculiarities. In fact, a course on cross-cultural communication would prove helpful. 'I don't treat a person from Gauteng the way I treat a person from Natal. Even if they are black, they are from different cultures.'⁴⁰

Since 'faith missions did not include any definite ecclesiology'⁴¹ when they planted their churches, it is necessary now that 'a conscious ecclesiology which takes seriously the young churches' identities, the missions' doctrinal traditions, and the social and political context in which the churches exist'⁴² be clearly and fully understood

38 Xaba, Interview (9 February 1999).

39 Willem Saayman, *Christian Mission in South Africa: Political and Ecumenical* (Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa, 1993), p. 99.

40 Aiken Zondo, Interview with author, cassette recording (Durban, South Africa: 10 February 1999).

41 Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions: From Hudson Taylor to Present Day Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1994), p. 323.

42 Fiedler, *Faith Missions*, p. 401.

by both mission and church leaders in training. They need to understand both in a theoretical and in a more practical way what the church is, and what should be done in the church.

The whole matter of women in training needs to be looked at carefully. It is interesting to note that 'In their first decades, faith missions challenged society in general, and the churches in particular, by their tremendous willingness to give women positions of responsibility and leadership...[Yet although] the missions (and faith missions prominent among them) were—though perhaps unconsciously—in the vanguard of the first feminist movement, today they tend more to make up the struggling rear'⁴³—this is no more evident than in the attitudes surrounding the training and use of women. While being encouraged to attend Bible Schools, they are rarely given positions in the church or recognized in any way. Churches rarely ever recommend women 'to function freely in the organization. And yet they keep pumping them into Bible Schools. That is burying people alive!'⁴⁴

Theological training schools are, more and more, becoming affiliated with theological faculties of the country's major universities. This gives both the schools and their graduates greater credibility as uniform standards are applied to the diploma and BTh training programs.

The curriculum of colleges, particularly evangelical colleges, tends to be

very traditional and must adapt to the needs of the people. According to the standards set by the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA),

The curriculum as a whole and the syllabus for each individual course subject should show that the institution has not merely borrowed these from elsewhere, nor simply allowed them to develop on an ad hoc basis, but that the institution has carefully planned the curriculum and each syllabus to meet its own particular objectives, for the specific Christian community it is serving, for the specific vocation for which the students are being prepared, and for the specific cultural context in which the students will minister. Selection of textbooks should also show sensitivity to contextual relevance.⁴⁵

It is important for the curricula to embrace 'the personal and social teachings of the Scriptures so that the whole is conveyed to the students'.⁴⁶ Colleges need to be answering the questions which the churches and their memberships are asking, rather than giving answers for issues or problems not needed by anyone. Church leaders and members need to be equipped and prepared to handle current issues and the potential dilemmas arising from them. For example, the whole issue of

43 Fiedler, *Faith Missions*, p. 395.

44 Wilson M. Magubane, Interview with author, cassette recording (Harmelia, Germiston, South Africa: 30 January 1999).

45 ACTEA, *ACTEA Standards and Procedures for Accreditation at Post-Secondary Level* (Jos, Nigeria: ACTEA Accreditation Services, 1992), Item 4b.

46 Hugh Wetmore, Interview with author, cassette recording (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: 9 February 1999)

AIDS is rarely addressed. It can no longer be sidestepped. Fortunately, a few organizations such as the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA) and the Evangelical Seminary of Southern Africa (ESSA) are offering conferences and training seminars to deal with them. This has been a determination of the Evangelical Seminary of Southern Africa based in Pietermaritzburg. While often misunderstood and even criticized because of it, the Seminary seems to have nevertheless succeeded in developing credibility perhaps not accomplished by other similar training institutions.

Ethical issues need to be addressed. When taught in a Bible School, these matters need to be presented in biblical context and also in relation to the spiritual ministry to people in terms of the forgiveness of sins and the salvation of Christ.

Once graduates have completed their training, before going directly into pastoring a church themselves, options need to be set in place for internships. To study under, and submit to, someone who can protect them and guide them as they build their confidence in ministry will weaken the strong temptations to resign when the ministries get tough. A mentoring program set up with seasoned and highly respected pastors who could work with them in terms of their long-term ministry and personal goals would be beneficial. Issues related to personal faith, assurance of the 'call' to ministry, family life, and providing for the family can be handled. It is interesting to note that all schools accredited with the ACTEA are required to give their students a guided practical experience 'in the specific vocations in which the indi-

vidual students are being prepared'.⁴⁷

The curricula of colleges need, most definitely, to provide for meaningful modelling by way of practical experience in applying the truths being studied. Pastors and their churches need to serve in a holistic way—offering practical and meaningful alternatives to previous lifestyles, giving people hope, and through it all helping them come to Christ. It means getting involved in more than just a social and economic uplifting, not pursuing the uplifting as an end in itself, but using it as a tool to bring people to salvation in Christ.

Missions and Churches could sponsor pastors' conferences to which they could invite a Bible teacher, an experienced churchman from Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia or some other country, not only to study the Word together, but to tackle the kinds of issues being faced in their areas. Furthermore, of course, this would strengthen the ties between evangelical churches across the continent.

Additionally, experienced personnel should purposefully provide vision, insights, strategies and biblical principles for individuals such as church planters in order to prevent meaningless approaches and haphazard outcomes. New systems or tactics can be investigated and attempted to reach the most productive result.

Furthermore, the world is growing ever-more educated. Therefore, opinions that consider advanced education as not 'inherently beneficial for missionary practitioners'⁴⁸ or even con-

⁴⁷ *ACTEA standards*, (1992), Item 4f.

⁴⁸ Gary Brumelow, 'More Musings', *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 36, (4 October 2000), p. 415

tributing to missionary attrition,⁴⁹ need to be adjusted. There are both expatriate and African church leaders who would like to pursue advanced degrees and doctoral level research in church-and/or theologically-related matters. Both the Mission and the Church can encourage such potentially enhanced leadership skills by arranging bursaries for candidates to study at both the master's and doctoral degree levels; this would pay rich dividends for both. Such bursaries could be granted on a 'contract' basis, which would require all bursary funds received by the student to be paid back should the degree program not be completed. Also, the contracts could stipulate that the recipient be required to give a certain number of years to the Mission or Church following the completion of the degree before becoming available for other ministry opportunities.

Forgetting what lies behind, we press forward!

One observer of missions history concludes:

For the African churches today, it is no longer a question of how to get rid of missionaries, but how to get enough of them...The most urgent issue for the church in Africa south of the Sahara in general (and for the great faith mission churches in particular) is how to cope with the tremendous numerical growth which they have experienced since the 1960s and which

they are still experiencing today.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, for a 'moving forward' to be successful, general thinking patterns regarding self and others need to be reformatted. According to Rev Knox Mavimbela, two major sins have covered South Africa—the pride of the Whites and the hate of the Blacks.⁵¹ Yet both must come to a point where the past no longer holds them from moving forward. The time has come 'to look at where we are now and to consider how much of the past practices we are still allowing to inform our decision-making. Please pray with us that God will raise people who will do as He says.'⁵² A pastor serving on the east side of Johannesburg declared that it is time to 'travel carefully so as to leave something for the next generation'.⁵³

In the final analysis, all that Missions and Churches ever wanted was to see a strong church in South Africa. We can echo the words of Waldron Scott: 'We are not responsible, as individuals, for the success of the Kingdom. But we are responsible, as individuals, to work for the King.'⁵⁴

50 Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions: From Hudson Taylor to Present Day Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1994), p. 89.

51 Knox Mavimbela, Interview with author, cassette recording (Roodepoort, South Africa: 27 January 1999).

52 Faki Bodibe, Interview with author, cassette recording (Roodepoort, South Africa: 3 February 1999).

53 Wilson M. Magubane, Interview with author, cassette recording (Harmelia, Germiston, South Africa: 28 January 1999).

54 Waldron Scott, *Bring Forth Justice: A Contemporary Perspective on Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 239.

49 Frank Severn, 'Musings on Education and Attrition', *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 36 (1 January 2000), pp. 20-1

The Doctrine of the Trinity and Subordinationism

Kevin Giles

KEYWORDS: *Modalism, tritheism, headship, hermeneutics, revelation, economic, Arianism, differentiation*

IN the latter part of the twentieth century the doctrine of the Trinity captured the attention of theologians more than any other doctrine.¹ At no time in history since the theologically stormy days of the fourth century has there been so much discussion on this topic, and the discussion does not seem to be ending! Books on the Trinity by Protestant, Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theologians continue to be published as I write. No longer is it thought that the Trinity is an obtuse, secondary and impractical dogma. Today theologians are generally agreed that this doctrine

is foundational to the Christian faith because it articulates what is most distinctive in the biblical revelation of God—he is triune.

The discussion in the last thirty years has ranged far and wide but it may be said with some confidence that conceptualising the Trinity as a *perichoretic* (interpenetrating) community of three ‘persons’² who work in perfect unity and harmony has been to the fore. This ‘model’ of the Trinity highlights the profound unity and the personal distinction within the Trinity without using abstract philosophical terms. It also excludes tritheism, modalism and subordinationism, the three great trinitarian heresies. The last of these, subordinationism, has been particularly under assault. Ted Peters says that if any-

1 This essay draws on the first part of my book, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), but exhibits some development in my thinking as I continue to read the Bible and the historical sources.

2 I put the word ‘person’ in inverted commas because there has been much debate as to what is the best word to designate the divine three. ‘Person’ when used in a trinitarian sense is acceptable if it is not taken as an exact synonym of what the word person means when used of humans.

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thing, contemporary mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic trinitarian thinking is 'antisubordinationist'.³

Paradoxically in this same period many evangelical theologians have been moving in the opposite direction. Since the 1980s, evangelicals wishing to uphold the male headship (understood as authoritative leadership) in the church and the home have been arguing that the Son is *eternally* subordinated to the Father as women are to men. Most speak only of an *eternal* subordination in *role/function* for the Son. However some evangelicals honestly admit that *eternal* role subordination by necessity implies subordination in person or being.⁴ Conservative evangeli-

icals who speak of the *eternal* subordination of the Son quote in support Paul's assertion that God the Father is the 'head of Christ' just as 'man is the head of woman' (1 Cor. 11:30), and the texts that speak of the Son being 'sent' by the Father (Jn. 4:34, 5:30 etc), and obeying the Father (Rom. 5:18-19, Heb. 5:8). In addition they claim that the eternal subordination of the Son is historic orthodoxy. We are told that this is the teaching of Athanasius, Augustine, Calvin and various other theologians, as well as the creeds.

What should we believe?

For all evangelicals the Bible is the ultimate authority in matters of doctrine and practice. However, in the ongoing debate concerning how the doctrine of the Trinity should best be formulated, *how to interpret the scriptures* on this matter has been the foundational issue.

Subordinationists (those who insist on the eternal and personal subordination of the Son and the Spirit in being and/or function)⁵ appeal to the texts that seem to subordinate the Son to the Father while non-subordinationists appeal to the texts that would seem to affirm the equality of the Father and the Son along with the Holy Spirit. If

3 Ted Peters, *God as Trinity* (Louisville: Westminster, 1993), p. 45.

4 The eternal role subordination of the Son apart from subordination in being is given classic expression in W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), pp. 454-70. I list numerous articles and books outlining this position in my, *The Trinity*, p. 23, n. 8. To this list should be added W. Grudem (ed.), *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, Crossway, 2002). See especially pp. 37, 47-52, 233-253. This position is entirely novel. It has no historical antecedents. Previously the argument has been that eternal subordination in being/nature/essence and work/operation/function are two sides of one coin. The classic expression of the contemporary case for the eternal subordination of the Son in being and role is found in the 1999 *Sydney Anglican Doctrine Commission Report*, 'The Doctrine of the Trinity and its Bearing on the Relationship of Men and Women', quoted in full in my *The Trinity*, pp. 122-137. Other examples of this position are also given in my book. In the Sydney report at one point the subordination of women is explicitly grounded in the 'differences in being' within the Godhead (par. 25).

5 All accept that the Son was for a limited period (*temporally*) subordinated in the incarnation. What is in dispute is whether or not the Son is subordinated in the *eternal* or immanent Trinity in his being/nature/person and/or work/operation/function. I will argue that orthodoxy has always held that it is a grave error to *eternally* subordinate the Son in his being or work for one implies the other.

there were no way to settle this debate over the interpretation of the Bible we would have a stalemate. Each side could simply go on quoting their proof texts and no resolution would be possible.

But this is not the case. Evangelicals both in support of the eternal subordination of the Son and those vehemently opposed to the eternal subordination of the Son are in complete agreement that 'tradition'—understood as how the scriptures have been understood by the best of theologians across the centuries—is a good guide to the proper interpretation of scripture—it is a secondary authority. So both sides claim the theological luminaries of the past and the creeds are on their side. The resolution of the debate therefore lies in determining whose reading of the scriptures is most faithful to the tradition.

The New Testament.

The first Christians were forced to rethink the doctrine of God they had inherited from Judaism because of Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection and the subsequent giving of the Holy Spirit. As Jews they were convinced that there is but one God, a truth Jesus himself affirmed (Mk. 12:29-32, cf. 1 Cor. 8:4; Eph. 4:6; James 2:19). This ruled out tritheism—three separate Gods. Nevertheless, they were also convinced that in some way Jesus and the Holy Spirit made the one God present. For this reason they frequently associated the Father, Son and Spirit together, implying their equality (cf. Mt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:13; Eph. 4:4-6 etc), and on occasions spoke of Jesus as *Theos* (Jn. 1:1; 20:28; Rom.

9:5; Heb. 1:8), calling him 'the Lord' (the title for Yahweh used in the Greek OT) some two hundred times. From these New Testament texts we see that the first Christians no longer thought of God as a simple mathematical unitary entity. He was in some way triune. Somehow these two seemingly opposing ideas had to be held: God is one and God is three. The New Testament writers agree on this but they give few insights as to how this might be so, or how it might be explained.

Modalism

One of the first suggestions as to how God might be three and one at the same time was that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were merely successive *modes of revelation* of the one God. This answer upheld the biblical truth that God is one, but it undermined the eternal distinct existence of the three divine persons, which the Bible also teaches. This error, which was called *modalism*, was rejected by the church Fathers, as it has been by subsequent orthodox theologians down to our day. It is believed that to be loyal to biblical revelation the doctrine of the Trinity must affirm without equivocation the unity of God and the eternal *and* personal coexistence of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Subordinationism.

Another early suggestion made by many second and early third century theologians who were opposed to modalism was that God the Father, a Monad, is God in the fullest sense, the Son is the *Logos* or Word of God always in the Father who was brought forth for

creation and redemption.⁶ They stressed that the Son and the Spirit were fully divine persons, but this *Logos* 'model' of the Trinity, while safeguarding the unity of God and excluding modalism, implied that the Son and the Spirit were secondary and tertiary subordinates to the one true God.

To exclude the problems this reading of scripture raised, catholic theologians from the time of Athanasius, on the basis of a deeper reflection on scripture, began with the belief that God was not a solitary Monad who begat the Son and the Spirit in time, but was a Tri-unity of three equal divine persons from all eternity. This was a revolutionary breakthrough in theological method.

Early in the fourth century Arius, a presbyter in Alexandria, went a step further and actually argued that God the Father alone was true God: the Son and the Spirit were lesser Gods, different in being/nature/essence from the one true God. In making this assertion Arius began a theological 'school', known as Arianism, which despite significant variations among its members, involved 'certain characteristic ideas'.⁷

The first and most important of these, says Hanson in his definitive study of fourth century Arianism, was ontological subordinationism—the subordination of the Son (and the Spirit) in his being/nature/essence.

This observation comes as no surprise, for most know that ontological subordinationism was of the essence of Arianism. What is of some surprise to many is that for the Arians this ontological subordinationism *always* had as its corollary the eternal functional subordination of the Son. The Arians believed that the human traits seen in the incarnate Son were proof that he was less than the Father—a creature—a 'sort of vulnerable God'.⁸ They made much of his ignorance of certain facts, tiredness, prayer life and suffering, and in particular they highlighted his sending by, and obedience to the Father. Hanson says the Arians consistently taught that the Son 'does the Father's will and exhibits obedience and subordination to the Father, and adores and praises the Father, not only in his earthly ministry but also in Heaven'.⁹

The Arians began with a Greek view of God who could have no contact with matter, let alone with human flesh, but their proof of the ontological subordination of the Son was based on many biblical texts that either seemed to subordinate the Son, or actually did subordinate him in some way. In other words they found proof of what they already believed by appeal to the Bible. Most of the texts quoted alluded to the Son's human characteristics and servant form seen in his incarnation. They argued that this biblical teaching spoke not only of the incarnate Son's relationship with his Father while on

6 In my *The Trinity*, pp. 60-62, I show that the Apologists, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Hippolytus, each in his own way adopts this approach.

7 *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), p. 99.

8 *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 103.

9 *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 103.

earth, but also of his eternal relationship with his Father in heaven.

Although Arianism was basically a fourth century phenomenon, subordinationism is a perennial threat to the life of the church. It is the most common of the three classic trinitarian errors.¹⁰ In almost every century there have been those who have argued in one way or another that the Son is eternally subordinated to the Father.¹¹ Calvin battled with such people in the 16th century; they flourished both on the continent and in England in the 17th century, and in the 18th century Charles Hodge, the staunchly reformed professor of theology at Princeton Seminary in the USA, taught, 'In the Holy Trinity there is a subordination of the Persons (of the Son and the Spirit) as to the mode of their subsistence (i.e. personal existence) and operation' (i.e. work/function/role).¹² And in the last thirty years, as was noted at the beginning of this article, subordinationism has become common among contemporary conservative evangelicals committed to the permanent subordination of women.

It has to be admitted that there are texts in the Bible that can be quoted, and Arius and his followers found every one of them, to support the *eternal* subordination of the Son. Jesus

himself once said, 'The Father is greater than I' (Jn. 14:28) and the scriptures speak of him being 'sent' (Jn. 4:34; 5:30 etc), and obeying the Father (Rom. 5:18-19; Heb. 4:8). What has to be asked is, how do these texts relate to the texts that speak of the Son as God (Jn. 1:1, 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:8), or as the Lord—the title used of *Yahweh* in the Greek Old Testament (Acts 2:21; Rom. 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:2—more than 200 times), or as equal with God (Philp. 2:6), or as 'head over all things' (Eph. 1:22; Col. 2:10)? This tension in the texts called for a hermeneutic that could make sense of the whole, without rejecting any of the parts.¹³

Athanasius' reply to the Arians

Arianism posed the greatest threat to Christianity that had arisen to this point of time. If Jesus the Son of God is not God in human form, then he did not perfectly reveal the Father, and he could not save, for only God can save. In this critical hour God raised up one of the greatest theologians of all times, St Athanasius (296-373).¹⁴ His grasp of the whole of scripture was profound and his theological acumen far exceeded that of his adversaries.

¹⁰ The other two are modalism and tritheism.

¹¹ In more detail see my *The Trinity*, 60-85.

¹² Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson), 1, pp. 445, 460-62, 464-65, 467-68, 474. It is to be noted that Hodge gives no support to eternal role subordination apart from a subordination in person. He holds that the Son is eternally subordinated in his person and operations or functions.

¹³ Exactly the same approach is needed today in the debate over what the Bible teaches on the status and ministry of women where there is a parallel tension in the texts. See my *The Trinity*, 194-211.

¹⁴ For what follows I refer readers to, 'Four Discourses Against the Arians', in *Athanasius, Selected Works and Letters*, vol 4, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (henceforth *NPNF*), ed P. Schaff and H. Wace (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971).

In reply to the Arians' appeal to the Bible Athanasius argued that they had failed to grasp the whole 'scope' of scripture and failed to recognize that scripture gives a 'double account' of the Son of God—one of his temporal and voluntary subordination in the incarnation, the other of his eternal divine status.¹⁵ On this basis he argued that texts that spoke of the divinity of the Son and of his equality with the Father pointed to his *eternal* status and dignity, and texts that spoke of the subordination of the Son pointed to his *voluntary and temporal* subordination necessitated by his becoming man for our salvation. For Athanasius the Son is *eternally one in being* with the Father, *temporally and voluntarily* subordinate in his incarnate ministry. Athanasius had no problems with the many texts that spoke of the Son's frailty, prayer life, obedience, or death on the cross. For him these texts affirmed unambiguously the Son's full human nature temporally and voluntarily assumed for our salvation. Such human traits, he argued, were not to be read back into the eternal Trinity.

As part of their case the Arians claimed that if the Son is 'begotten' (they took this to mean created) by the Father, then he must be less than the Father because all human sons are less than their father. In reply to this reasoning Athanasius first argued that the biblical metaphor of 'begetting' when applied to the Son of God did not imply creation. The Bible did not teach that the Son was one of God the Creator's works but rather God himself differentiated from the Father by origination.

For Athanasius the Son was 'begotten' of the Father not created by the Father. The terminology of begetting *differentiated* the persons, but did not subordinate the persons. In regard to the Arians' claim that all sons were less than their human fathers, Athanasius next argued that in fact all sons are *one in being* with their father.

A third incredibly important insight into what the scriptures taught about the persons of the Trinity was made when Athanasius pointed out that in the Bible what God *does* reveals *who God is*—the being of God is made manifest in the works of God. He thus argued that it is because Jesus does what only God can do (raise the dead, heal the sick, forgive sins, offer salvation, reign as Lord and head over all, etc) that we are to know he is God (cf. Jn. 5:19). So, for Athanasius, in contrast to Arius and his followers, the being/nature/essence and the works/operations/functions of the Father and the Son are one. The three divine persons are one in being and one in action. *Who they are* and *what they do* cannot be separated.

In enunciating this principle, Athanasius perfectly captured biblical thinking. This unity of being and action between the Father, Son and Spirit, first spelt out by Athanasius, is a constant theme from this point on in the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. On this basis it is held that to *eternally* subordinate the Son or the Spirit in work/operation/function by necessity implies their ontological subordination. If one person on the basis of personal identity alone must always take the subordinate role, then they must be a subordinated person, less than their superior in some way.

15 Athanasius, 3.29 (p. 409).

Athanasius believed that in the incarnate Son, God was truly present in the world in human form. The texts he quotes most of all are, 'The Father and I are one' (Jn. 10:30), and, 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father' (Jn. 14:9). So emphatic was he that the Son was fully God, he repeatedly says, 'The same things are said of the Son which are said of the Father, except for calling him Father.'¹⁶

The Cappadocian Fathers

In the later part of Athanasius' life his closest and most gifted theological allies were 'The Cappadocian fathers' (three learned theologians who were all born in Cappadocia in Asia Minor) who likewise were totally opposed to subordinating the Son in the *eternal* Trinity in any way. In thinking about the God revealed in scripture they begin not with God the Creator but with the eternally triune Godhead (*Theotes*).¹⁷ For them the divine three share at an inter-trinitarian level one being (*ousios*) yet they are eternally three *hypostases*. The *hypostases* could be distinguished but not separated, differentiated but not divided. For them their unity is that of three persons in communion (*koinonia*) and it is so profound that each person interpenetrates the other.¹⁸

Like Athanasius, the Cappadocians not only insisted that all three persons were one in being (*homoousios*) but also that they worked/functioned/operated as one. Oneness in being necessitated oneness in action and vice versa. So Basil wrote:

We perceive the operation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to be one and the same, in no respect showing differences or variation; from this identity of operation we necessarily infer the unity of nature.¹⁹

For the Cappadocians the idea that the Son is eternally obedient, always a servant under the Father, as their chief Arian opponent Eunomius emphatically and repeatedly argued,²⁰ was a gross error. They take up this matter time and time again. In reply they insist that in the New Testament the Son's servanthood and obedience is limited to the incarnation. Gregory of Nyssa says, 'By his partaking of creation he also partook of servitude.'²¹ Furthermore they argued that in the incarnation the Son was representative man.²² His obedience countered the disobedience of Adam that had brought ruin to the human race. Again I quote Gregory of Nyssa who in

¹⁶ 'Four Discourses', 3.4 (p. 395), 3.5 (p. 395), 3.6 (p. 396), 'The Councils', 3.49 twice (p. 476).

¹⁷ I refer readers to the writings of the Cappadocians in *NPNF*, vols 5, 7, and 8 rather than secondary sources.

¹⁸ This insight first found in Athanasius was later called in Greek, the doctrine of *perichoresis*.

¹⁹ Basil 'Letters', *NPNF*, 8, 189.7 (p. 32).

²⁰ For details on this see Eunomius' 'Confession of Faith' as given by Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 619-621, particularly towards the bottom of p. 620.

²¹ *NPNF*, 5, 6.4, (p. 187) For similar comments by Basil see *NPNF*, 8, 'Basil Letters', 261.2 (p. 300).

²² As Gregory of Nazianzus says explicitly. See *NPNF*, 7, 'Theological Orations', 4.5 (p. 311).

answering Eunomius points out that 'the mighty Paul' says 'he became obedient' (Philp, 2:8) to accomplish the mystery of redemption by the cross, who had emptied himself by assuming the likeness and fashion of a man ... healing the disobedience of men by his own obedience'.²³ For the Cappadocians, the Son's obedience was not compulsory submission to another's will, the will of the Father, but rather a coincidence of willing. What the Father wills and what the Son wills are always one. Basil holds that the Son's

will is connected in indissoluble union with the Father. Do not let us then understand by what is called a 'commandment' a peremptory mandate delivered by organs of speech, and giving orders to the Son, as to a subordinate, concerning what he ought to do. Let us rather in a sense befitting the Godhead, perceive the transmission of will, like the reflection of an object in a mirror, passing without note between the Father and the Son.²⁴

On this basis the Cappadocians argued the divine three have but one will. They always work in perfect harmony and unison.

For the Cappadocians the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are differentiated by their differing origins and thus differing relations and nothing else. The Father is 'unbegotten,' the Son 'begotten' and the Spirit 'proceeding'. For them differentiating the persons in this way did not in any way suggest the sub-

ordination of the Son or the Spirit. To ensure the unity of the Godhead they spoke of the Father as the 'sole source' or 'sole origin' (Greek *monarche*) of the being of the Son and the Spirit. In their thinking this too did not imply any subordination whatsoever for the three *hypostases* shared in the one being of the Godhead and each interpenetrated the other. In other words for them, derivation of being did not imply diminution of being, or demotion in authority.

However, in making the Father the *arche*/origin of the being of the Son and the Spirit, many western theologians think a conceptual weakness was introduced. A certain priority was given to the Father. To simply deny that the *monarche* of the Father envisages the Son and the Spirit standing 'below' the Father does not solve the problem. Eastern Orthodox theologians generally endorse the *monarche* of the Father, denying it implies any hint of subordinationism. Nevertheless in recent times, as an outcome of ecumenical dialogue, some of them have begun speaking, as Athanasius did, of the divine Trinity as the *arche*.²⁵ Like most contemporary theologians they want to exclude completely subordinationism.

First at the council of Nicea in 325, and then at the council of Constantinople in 381 the idea that the Son was subordinated in his being to the Father was totally rejected. In the Nicene creed, as finally worded at the council of Constantinople, the Son is confessed as one in being (*homoousios*) with the

²³ *NPNF*, 5, 'Against Eunomius', 2.11 (p. 121). See also 'Basil Letters', 261.2 (p. 300).

²⁴ *NPNF*, 8, 'On the Spirit', 8.20 (p. 14)

²⁵ See further my *The Trinity*, p. 100.

Father.²⁶ In making this theological pronouncement this creed also pronounced on how the scriptures should be read. To read back into the eternal Trinity the subordination of the Son seen in the incarnation, the creed rules, is a hermeneutical error.

Augustine and his heirs.

Early in the fifth century, in the western side of the Roman Empire another great theologian, Augustine of Hippo (a city in North Africa), gave his mind to restating the doctrine of the Trinity. In his presentation of this doctrine he begins with the unity of the triune God and then explains how the divine three are distinct 'persons'.²⁷ Like Athanasius, he is particularly keen to first establish how the scriptures are to be read correctly—canonically is his word. For him the unequivocal divinity and unity of the three 'persons' is the foundational premise. Then, making Philippians 2:4-6 the key to a right reading of scripture, he insists that all texts that refer to the equality in divinity, majesty and authority of the Son speak of his eternal status, and all texts that refer to some subordination or frailty speak of his temporal and voluntary subordination in the incarnation for our salvation.

In Augustine the emphasis falls on the one substance or being of God.

With this starting point there can be no subordination whatsoever in the Trinity since all three persons 'share the inseparable equality of one substance present in divine unity'.²⁸ Because the three persons are one in their inner life, this means that for Augustine their works in the world are one. Particular works could be 'appropriated' to each person (e.g. creation to the Father, redemption to the Son and sanctification to the Spirit) but always the divine three act as one. They work in perfect unison and harmony. Thus he spoke of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as having 'one will'. For this reason it is an impossibility for Augustine to speak of the Father commanding and the Son obeying as if there could be a conflict of wills within the eternal Trinity.

With his stress on the unity and equality of the three divine persons, Augustine also had to carefully and unambiguously distinguish them to avoid any hint of modalism. He argued that the names 'Father', 'Son' and 'Holy Spirit' are designations given to three unchanging and unchangeable relations²⁹ within the Godhead, predicated on differing origination. The Father is distinguished as Father because he 'begets' the Son; the Son is distinguished because as the Son he is 'begotten'; the Spirit is distinguished from the Father and the Son because he is 'bestowed' by them.³⁰ For Augustine, just as with Athanasius and the

²⁶ It is to be noted, however, that from the eleventh century there have been Eastern and Western versions of this creed that differ as to whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone or the Father and the Son. I explain this debate below.

²⁷ See the translation of *De Trinitate* by E. Hill, *The Trinity*, (Brooklyn: New City, 1991).

²⁸ *De Trinitate*, 2.15.

²⁹ i.e. the Father is always the Father of the Son, the Son is always the Son of the Father etc.

³⁰ *De Trinitate*, 5.1ff.

Cappadocians, differentiating the persons does not imply the subordination of any of the persons. Equality and difference are both fully embraced without reserve.

Augustine thought of the Holy Spirit as the mutual love of the Father and the Son and as the communal bond that unites them. This meant that for him the Holy Spirit could not be the Spirit of just one of them but rather of the two in relationship. This theological insight he found taught in scripture. He noted that the Bible spoke of the Holy Spirit as both the Spirit of the Son and the Spirit of the Father. The Father *and* the Son must therefore be 'the origin', or 'principlium' of the Holy Spirit.

It is thus of no surprise to find that at the third council of Toledo in 589 the words 'and the Son' (these three English words translate one Latin word, *Filioque*) were added to the Nicene Creed which had until that time spoken of the Spirit as proceeding solely 'from the Father'. This led to a growing divide between Eastern and Western theologians. The latter generally believe this addition safeguarded the vital truth established in the Nicene creed that the Father and the Son are one in being/substance; it also disallows any disjunction between the Son and the Spirit that would be contrary to scripture where the Spirit can be called either 'the Spirit of God' or 'the Spirit of Jesus' (Acts 16:7, cf. Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6). This addition was not intended to subordinate the Spirit to the Father and the Son, but it must be admitted that the Eastern Orthodox objection that it does just this, at least conceptually, cannot be ignored.

After Augustine's death his 'model' of the Trinity was encapsulated in the

so-called, Athanasian Creed. (Athanasius was long dead when it was compiled.) This creed stresses the unity of the Trinity and the equality of the persons. It ascribes equal divinity, majesty and authority to all three persons. 'Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Spirit.' All three are said to be 'almighty' and 'Lord' (no subordination in authority); 'none is before or after another (no hierarchical ordering); none is greater, or less than another (no subordination in being or nature) ... all three are co-equal'. The Son is only 'inferior to the Father as touching his manhood'. A more explicit rejection of the *eternal* subordination of the Son in being, function, or authority is hard to imagine. Those who confess this creed are affirming that this is what they believe and that this is what the Bible teaches when read correctly.

The great Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century restated and developed Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity. Like Augustine he began with and emphasised the unity of God before he discussed the distinction of the persons. With his stress on the divine unity of the Godhead there can be no subordinationism whatsoever within the eternal or immanent Trinity. Roman Catholic theologians have consistently followed him on this principle. There is not time in this essay to say more on Aquinas but more must be said about Calvin's teaching on the Trinity because for many evangelicals he is the theologian *par excellence*.

John Calvin.

Calvin made several important contributions to the doctrine of the Trinity.

Foreshadowing modern developments he eclectically drew on the best of Eastern and Western trinitarian thinking, yet seeking always to be faithful to the formulations of this doctrine as it had been passed on. However, as the Bible was his primary authority, he was not adverse to modifying terminology or explanations found in the tradition so that the scriptures determined the theology he enunciated. But he soon saw that appealing to the Bible did not silence his subordinationist opponents who also appealed to scripture, quoting texts that seemed to support their position. Like Athanasius and Augustine before him he concluded that Philippians 2:4-11 prescribed how scripture was to be read correctly. He returns to this text time and time again. Here he sees the scriptures teaching that in becoming man the Son willingly and freely chose to subordinate himself for our salvation. He took 'the form of a slave ... and became obedient to the point of death'. On this basis Calvin insists, like Athanasius and Augustine, that all texts that speak of the frailty, subordination, or obedience of the Son refer only to his incarnate existence. Eternally the Son is equal in divinity, majesty, and authority with the Father and the Spirit.

For Calvin the Son perfectly reveals the Father. He is 'God with us'. Like Athanasius, he loves to quote Jesus' words in John 14:9, 'whoever has seen me has seen the Father'. Boldly he argues the Son's divine status is not bestowed by the Father. He is God in his own right (*autotheos*). Nevertheless, this revelation of God's self is in the flesh and as such is 'veiled' and 'concealed', rec-

ognized only by faith.³¹ In response, his opponents argued that the Son's servant status and obedience, so clearly attested to in scripture, indicates rather an ongoing subordinate status for the Son. The great Reformer goes to great pains to refute his critics. He notes that Paul quite specifically in Philippians 2:8 speaks of the Son's 'obedience' as one of the human traits that his 'voluntary' emptying of himself involved. He writes,

Laying aside the splendor of majesty, he showed himself obedient to his Father (cf. Phil. 2:8). Having completed his subjection, he was at last crowned with glory and honour (Heb. 2:9) and exalted to the highest Lordship that before him every knee should bow ... (Phil. 2:10).³²

Then in the next sub-section in his *Institutes*, in speaking of the soteriological work of the Son, he returns to the matter of his obedience. Now he points out that the Son had to be obedient if he were to be the second Adam. To make his point he asks,

How has Christ abolished sin, banished the separation between us and God and acquired righteousness to render God favourable and kindly towards us? To this we in general reply that he has achieved this for us by the whole course of his obedience. This is proved by Paul's testimony: 'As by one man's disobedience many were made sin-

³¹ *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed J. Neil, trans. F. L. Battles (London: SCM, 1960), 2.13.2.

³² *Institutes*, 2.14.3.

ners, so by one man's obedience we are made righteous' (Rom. 5:19).³³

He then adds, 'His willing obedience is the important thing because a sacrifice not offered voluntarily would not have furthered righteousness.' The voluntary nature of the Son's obedience is a recurring motif in Calvin's writings.

What Calvin says on this matter is unambiguous. For him the Son's obedience is limited to the incarnation. It is indicative of his true humanity assumed for our salvation.³⁴ The Son's last act of obedience was the cross (Philp. 2:8). From them on he rules as Lord and head over all. In this whole discussion on the person and work of Christ in the *Institutes* we see Calvin contrasting what he calls, 'the time of his humiliation'³⁵ of his earthly ministry with his subsequent majesty and authority in heaven.³⁶ Thus for Calvin, to read back into the exalted status what scripture explicitly limits to the Son's humbled status is a grave error. This he saw was the root cause of sub-

ordinationism of his day.

B. B. Warfield in his lengthy and detailed essay on Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity concludes that Calvin's aim was 'to eliminate the last remnants of subordinationism',³⁷ being in 'inexpugnable opposition to subordinationists of all types'.³⁸

The twentieth century

Sadly from the time of Calvin until late in the twentieth century, most Protestant theologians lost interest in the doctrine of the Trinity, as did most Roman Catholic theologians. The tendency was to treat the Trinity as a formal doctrine that needed to be outlined and then left to one side. Not surprisingly, many of the discussions of the *Trinity* in theological textbooks from this period are sadly inadequate and sometimes historically and theologically in error. Theologians who purport to be teaching historical orthodoxy all too often endorse modalism or subordinationism.

Two exceptions to this general rule among Reformed and evangelical theologians should be noted. First we mention B. B. Warfield (1851-1921), the great defender of biblical authority. In opposition to the subordinationism espoused by Charles Hodge he wrote to 'vigorously reassert the principle of equalisation' in the Trinity.³⁹ Mainly by appeal to the Bible he refuted argu-

³³ *Institutes*, 2.16.5.

³⁴ P. van Buren, *Christ in Our Place*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), p. 38, says, 'We cannot speak of the obedience of Christ in Calvin's theology without speaking of the strong emphasis he puts on the idea that this obedience was performed in Christ's human nature only.' See pp. 23-40 where he develops this theme. For a virtually identical conclusion see also R. A. Peterson, *Calvin and the Atonement* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 1999), pp. 61-68.

³⁵ *Institutes*, 2.11.12

³⁶ On this basis Reformed theologians developed their Christology, speaking of the two states of Christ, his humiliated state in the incarnation and his exalted state after the resurrection.

³⁷ 'Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity' in *Calvin and Augustine*, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956), p. 230.

³⁸ 'Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity', p. 251.

³⁹ B.B. Warfield, 'The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity', in *Biblical Foundations* (London: Tyndale, 1958), p. 116.

ments used to suggest that the Son and the Spirit are *eternally* subordinated in their 'subsistence' (personal being) and/or in their 'operations' (work or function). Warfield does speak of the subordination of the Son in 'function' in the work of redemption.⁴⁰ This subordination he says was voluntarily, 'due to a convention, an agreement between the persons of the Trinity', and he insists it is not eternal. This means that although the terminology differs, Warfield in speaking of the functional subordination of the Son is referring basically to what I call the temporal and voluntary subordination of the Son in the incarnation.

In even more detail Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) in the Netherlands masterfully restated the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity in the second volume of his *Dogmatics*, later translated into English in abbreviated form as, *The Doctrine of God*.⁴¹ In this work Bavinck not only gives an excellent account of the doctrine of the Trinity as it had been historically developed but also sets out to repudiate modalism and all forms of subordinationism, two errors he sees as a perennial threats to the life and well-being of the church.

However, most attribute the awakened contemporary interest in the doctrine of the Trinity to Karl Barth among Protestants and Karl Rahner among Roman Catholics. More has been written on this doctrine in the last thirty

years than any other doctrine. This has involved a return to the historic sources and the development of the best insights from the Eastern and Western models of the Trinity. In this process, many have found the contribution of Athanasius particularly instructive.

Some discussions have sought to break new ground, but the predominant trend has been to utilise the best insights from the past, depicting the Trinity as the three divine persons bound together in a unity of being and action, mutually indwelling one another. The evangelical theologian Millard Erickson in his 1995 book, *God in Three Persons: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity* eloquently sums up how the doctrine is understood by most contemporary theologians.

The Trinity is a communion of three persons, three centers of consciousness, who exist and always have existed in union with one another and in dependence on one another ... Each is essential to the life of the others, and to the life of the Trinity. They are bound to one another in love, *agape* love, which therefore unites them in the closest and most intimate of relationships. This unselfish, *agape* love makes each more concerned for the other than for himself. There is therefore a mutual submission of each to each of the others and a mutual glorifying of one another. There is complete equality of the three.⁴²

40 'The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity', p. 110.

41 Herman Bavinck (translated and edited, by William Hendriksen). *The Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951).

42 Millard Erickson, *God in Three Persons: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), p. 331.

Practical outcomes

Because virtually all theologians agree that the doctrine of the Trinity should inform human relationships correctly, enunciating the historically developed doctrine of the Trinity is of great practical consequence. If in the Trinity all have the same authority, 'none are before or after', all are 'co-equal' (the Athanasian Creed), then the doctrine of the Trinity calls into question all forms of human domination. It reminds us that totalitarian regimes that ride roughshod over people, hierarchical ordering that presupposes that some are born to rule and others to obey cannot and never will reflect the divine ideal seen in the Trinity. And to be quite specific, rather than supporting the permanent subordination of women in the church and the home, the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity suggests exactly the opposite.

Postscript: The difficult texts

In answer to what I have written some will reply that I have not explained those few often quoted texts that do suggest the Son is subordinate to the Father. I have dealt with the obedience theme but what about John 14:28, 1 Corinthians 11:3, 15:28 and the fact that the Father sends the Son? Let me very briefly comment on these few texts subordinationists love to quote so as not to leave any loose ends.

John 14:28: 'The Father is greater than I.' This is a difficult text to be sure because it stands in stark contrast to John's teaching that the Son reveals the Father and the Father and the Son are one. The best solution would seem to be that given by Ambrose, Augus-

tine, Calvin and many others that Jesus here speaks as the incarnate Son in his state of humiliation.

John 4:34 etc.: In John's Gospel Jesus is he who is 'sent' by the Father. In that the Son is sent, some see eternal subordination implied. He always does as he is commanded. However, in John the sending of the Son is best explained in terms of the Jewish *shaliach* principle, the one sent has the same authority of the one who sends. If this is the case, sending does not indicate subordination but equal authority.

1 Corinthians 11:3: 'God is the head of Christ.' Many evangelicals today think that here Paul speaks of a fourfold hierarchy, God-Christ-man-woman. This is not the case. Paul in fact speaks of a three-fold pairing; in each case one person being the metaphorical head of another, and not in a hierarchical order. First he mentions Christ and man and last, God and Christ. What Paul seems to be doing in this verse and throughout this passage is seeking to differentiate men and women, not subordinate Christ or women. Grudem wants us to believe that the Greek word *kephale* (translated into English as 'head') always means a 'person in authority over'.⁴³ His premise is that words have one fixed meaning, the context does not matter. Virtually all linguists are of another opinion. Any given word has a range of meanings and the context is the most important indicator of that meaning. The erudite Anthony Thiselton carefully considers Grudem's thesis and dismisses it. He holds that Paul

⁴³ Grudem, *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, p. 47.

is playing on the 'multiple meanings' of *kephale* in 1 Cor. 11:3-16 and in v. 3 it does not 'denote a relation of subordination or authority over'.⁴⁴ The context rules out of court Grudem's understanding of *kephale* in v. 3 because Paul immediately goes on to speak of men and women leading the congregation in prayer and prophecy, the two most important ministries in the Corinthian church, so long as they are differentiated by what they have or do not have on their 'head'. To reply that prophecy does not signify authority to speak on behalf of God, whereas teaching does, is special pleading. Paul makes prophecy the second most important gift ahead of teaching (1 Cor. 11:28). Here we need also to remember that elsewhere in Paul the risen Son is said to be 'head over all things' (Eph. 1:22, Col. 2:10)—and no one disputes that

Paul in these verses is speaking of Christ as 'a person in authority over.'

1 Corinthians 15:28: In this passage Paul seems to speak of the Son's rule coming to an end at the consummation of all things and of him becoming subject to the Father. The first problem this text raises is that elsewhere the Son's reign is said to be 'forever' (2 Sam. 7:2-4; Isa. 9:7; Lk. 1:33; 2 Peter 1:11; Rev. 7:10-12, 11:15; cf. Eph. 1:20). Then there is the question as to whether the Greek verb translated 'subjected' is passive voice, 'Christ is subjected by God', or middle, 'Christ subjects himself'. The latter seems preferable because in the incarnation the Son voluntarily subordinates himself and this would be a parallel. What Paul thus seems to be suggesting is that the rule God the Father gave to God the Son at the resurrection is freely handed back to the Father by the Son at the end. Rather than speaking of fixed roles, or of the eternal subordination of the Son, this text indicates a changing of roles in differing epochs.

⁴⁴ Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 816. D. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2003), p. 506-516, reaches virtually the same conclusion.

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Lamin Sanneh
*Whose Religion is Christianity? The
Gospel beyond the West*

Reviewed by Max Davidson
Kevin N. Giles
*The Trinity and Subordinationism: The
Doctrine of God and the Contemporary
Gender Debate*

Book Reviews

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**Whose Religion is Christianity?
The Gospel beyond the West**

Lamin Sanneh

Grand Rapids/Cambridge:
Eerdmans, 2003

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Pb ppl 38 Index

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

Respected Gambian historian Lanin Sanneh of Yale Divinity School has written a short book in an engaging dialogue style to present his important perspective on recent missions history. He focuses on the remarkable growth of the church in Africa in particular since the end of the colonial era, aiming to show the significance of this phenomenon 'for a fresh understanding of the gospel in world history' (p. 71). This is specially important at a time when the post-Christian West has difficulty in coming to terms with the virility of post-western Christianity in the Third World; this is true even in the great cities of the West where ethnic expressions of Christian life are typically much more dynamic than those of the mainstream churches. Taking the widest possible view of historical and cultural developments, Sanneh hopes that this new per-

spective will counter the 'contemporary confidence in the secular destiny of the West as an elevated stage of human civilization' and scepticism about resurgence of Christianity as a worldwide religion and its welcome in the West.

Although Christian missions have often been interpreted as 'cultural imperialism' and 'religious bigotry' (p. 20) at their worst, and even the sending churches and missions have difficulty in putting aside their cultural superiority to recognize the true significance of the exponential growth in the Third World, Sanneh aims to highlight the significance of the breakthrough that has occurred. To do so he distinguishes between 'global' Christianity and 'world' Christianity—the latter is 'the faithful replication of Christian forms and patterns developed in Europe', or in other words, 'the religious establishment and the cultural captivity of faith', which carries 'vestiges' of 'Christendom' (in its medieval sense), and has 'connotations of parallels with economic globalization' (pp. 22-23).

On the other hand, 'world Christianity' is the 'movement of Christianity as it takes form and shape in societies that previously were not Christian' where there was no 'bureaucratic tradition with which to domesticate the gospel' and in which Christianity 'was received and expressed through the cultures, customs, and tradi-

tions of the people affected.' It is a case not of 'the Christian discovery of indigenous societies' but the reverse—the 'indigenous discovery of Christianity' (p. 10) and the resultant 'renewal of local languages; and the old customs and traditions in response to its ethics of love, reconciliation, justice, and responsibility' and 'new structures and institutions guiding the expansion' (p. 22). World Christianity is necessarily diverse, a 'variety of indigenous responses through more or less effective local idioms' (p. 22), in contrast with global Christianity which is usually thought of as monocultural.

He points out that in Africa at the end of the colonial era global Christianity was decried, but it is precisely since then that world Christianity has exploded on to the scene (against the predictions of the experts), especially in 'societies marked by weak states and among impoverished populations, and where religious loyalties are stronger than political ones' (p. 27). This resurgence, which is not limited to Africa, 'seems to proceed without western organizational structures, including academic recognition and is occurring amidst widespread political instability and the collapse of public institutions' (p. 3).

Drawing pertinent comparisons with the nature and growth of Islam (about which he can speak with considerable authority), Sanneh declares that the key factor in this indigenous discovery of Christianity was the translation of the Bible into local languages, and especially the use of the vernacular name for God. This process had the effect of providing deep and positive links with local culture which bypassed the inhibiting cultural heritage of global Christianity. Denying that world Christianity is simply 'Third World syncretism blended with vestigial paganism and spiced with exotic and

implacable tribalism' (p. 70), Sanneh points to fundamental biblical concepts such as creation in the image of God, incarnation and atonement, and conversion, as the basis for interpreting the rapid expansion of Christianity as a welcome means for people to create 'genuine communities of freedom, solidarity, and reconciliation' (p. 71) which are an intrinsic part of the human story and of the Christian story.

Sanneh also denies that this remarkable growth is a case of 'cultural convenience'. Instead, he points out that the old religions had 'only a limited ethical range' whereas Christianity made 'demands on the affections, loyalties, attitudes, and behavior of people'. It reoriented their worldviews, and in short, 'Christianity helped Africans to become renewed Africans, not remade Europeans' (pp. 42-3).

In this book, Sanneh is therefore highlighting nothing less than 'a historical shift in Christianity's theological center of gravity'. He argues that 'this indigenous theological domestication is comparable in scope and consequence to the Hellenization of theology in the early church, but this time without the state apparatus'.

This phenomenon has important significance on a number of levels—political, religious and cultural—as well as the missiological, where Sanneh has achieved his own breakthrough by focusing on the recipients of the gospel, not the mission agents or sending organisations. In fact, it is a salutary thesis for the Western church, yet at the same time, a hopeful one because of the lessons which can be learned by a church which seems to have retreated 'into isolation', and whose 'spirit seems to be wilting' (p. 30). Through the material presented here, the European church can see in world

Christianity 'the gospel as it is being embraced by societies that have not been shaped by the Enlightenment' and possibly learn that 'religion is not about deserted pews' (p 57) !

Although not naïve about the possible dangers, Sanneh wards off the suggestion that the Third World is likely to emulate the West with its problems of the state, political power and secularization by pointing out intrinsic factors which counteract this tendency. He also points out that the new churches have achieved so much already without the history of religious warfare that has dogged western Christianity. On the positive side, 'suffering people have found faith and hope'. Admittedly, joining the church does not solve all the problems of society, but 'for the new African Christians the church is a good place to work out the problems and challenges of life and society. ... The Christian example is part of the public good, not apart from it' (pp 32-33).

Although the theme of this book is similar to *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* by Philip Jenkins (OUP, 2002), Sanneh's focus is much more concentrated. This, together with the self-interview dialogue style (although sometimes repetitious and contrived) and many colourful word pictures, means that his point is difficult to miss, making the book essential reading for Christians in the 21st century.

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The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate

Kevin N. Giles

Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002

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Reviewed by Max Davidson, Morling College, Sydney, Australia

This is a book that held my attention from the first page to the last. Not all books achieve that! Kevin Giles, an Anglican clergyman serving in a local parish in Melbourne, Australia, has already written widely on both women's issues and the church. His interest in the theological basis of the relationships between men and women dates from the 1970s.

Although the first part of the title indicates a Trinitarian focus, the book is primarily concerned with gender relations. Giles initially planned to write a short article about what he perceived as a 'growing tendency among evangelicals to speak of the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father', but instead found himself engaged in a major study of the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The book in part recounts a journey of discovery by Giles, and at this level alone, makes absorbing reading as the author's findings unfold. At times the language and style are quite vigorous, reflecting the passion with which he holds to an egalitarian perspective on the gender issue. At the same time, he seeks to back his assertions with evidence and argument.

Appealing to key theologians such as Athanasius, Augustine and Calvin, Giles

argues that the tradition of the church has not understood the Trinity to involve any permanent subordination of the Son to the Father. Subordination belongs to the economic Trinity, not the immanent Trinity. So Giles rejects the recent claims of some evangelicals that women should be subordinate to men in the same way that the Son is forever subordinate to the Father.

Moreover, he disputes the claim of some contemporary evangelicals, who hold a hierarchical understanding of gender relations in home and church, that they are true to the tradition of the church in terms of Trinitarian subordination. Giles argues it is only since the 1970s that permanent role subordination has been said to exist within Trinitarian relationships, despite ontological equality, and that this eternal structure should be reflected in relationships between the sexes. In particular, Giles interacts mainly with two recent publications that argue for hierarchical gender relations (Piper and Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Crossway, 1991; and Köstenberger, Schreiner and Baldwin, eds. *Women in the Church*, Baker, 1995), as well as with a statement from the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, Australia.

To strengthen his case, Giles claims that there is a parallel between the biblical statements about slavery and those about gender relations. In his understanding, the Bible does not support slavery any more than it supports the permanent subordination of women to men in home and church. Not all evangelicals will agree with him, but his case deserves serious consideration.

His argument is one that has significant hermeneutical implications, and this fact makes the book even more interesting than it would otherwise have been. Giles considers it is methodologically unsatisfactory for evangelicals from opposing

positions to do theology merely by citing and exegeting biblical texts. The result of such an approach is that both sides confirm their own positions! Instead, and this he says he found in Athanasius's approach in the fourth century Arian debate, the overarching emphasis of Scripture should be identified and given precedence. Texts that might be at variance with that emphasis should be understood as being time and culturally bound, and interpreted accordingly.

Giles illustrates this principle by considering the exegetical arguments used by leading evangelical theologians in the nineteenth century to support slavery. The principle of the equal value of all humans made in the image of God must take precedence over specific texts that at least do not condemn slavery, and which may have been thought to support it.

So in terms of theological method, this book makes a valuable contribution. Giles argues that new cultural situations can be used by God to enable us to see truths in his Word that were extremely difficult for exegetes to discern previously, because of their cultural context.

For this reason alone, the book is worthy of careful study by academics, pastors and students, and all who want to do better theology. Beyond this, the reader will be better informed on both gender issues and Trinitarian theology. Not everyone will agree with everything Giles has written. But if further encouragement were needed for this book to be studied carefully, consider the range of issues raised in its final sentences: 'All texts that imply the equality of the sexes speak of God's ultimate eschatological ideal; all texts that speak of the subordination of women are culturally limited, time bound, practical advice to women living in a culture that took for granted the subordination of women. They do not apply in our age.'

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