

# CONTENTS

Theme: *The Multi-faceted Gospel*

Editorial: The Multi-Faceted Gospel  
*page 99*

Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*:  
A Report of the International Consultation between the  
Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance  
(1993—2002)  
G. VANDERVELDE  
*page 100*

Toward a Theology of HIV/AIDS  
PHILLIP MARSHALL  
*page 131*

Who are the Heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant?  
JOHN P. DAVIS  
*page 149*

J.R.R. Tolkien as a Christian for Our Times  
JEFFREY L. MORROW  
*page 164*

The message and messenger of the Gospel  
VICTOR B. COLE  
*page 178*

Book Reviews  
*page 185*

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY VOLUME 29, NO 2, April 2005

# Evangelical Review of Theology

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



Volume 29 No. 2 April 2005

# Evangelical Review of Theology

EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

Volume 29 · Number 2 · April 2005

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

Published by



**PATERNOSTER PERIODICALS**



for  
WORLD EVANGELICAL  
ALLIANCE  
Theological Commission

ISSN: 0144-8153

Volume 29 No. 2 April 2005

Copyright © 2005 World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission

**Editor**

David Parker

**Committee**

The Executive Committee of the WEA Theological Commission  
Dr Rolf Hille, Executive Chair

**Editorial Policy**

The articles in the Evangelical Review of Theology reflect the opinions of the authors and reviewers and do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or the Publisher.

**Manuscripts, reports and communications**  
should be addressed to the Editor and sent to Dr David Parker,  
17 Disraeli St, Indooroopilly, 4068, Qld, Australia

The Editors welcome recommendations of original or published articles or book reviews that relate to forthcoming issues for inclusion in the Review. Please send clear copies of details to the above address.

Email enquiries welcome: [dparker@pacific.net.au](mailto:dparker@pacific.net.au)  
Web site: [www.worldevangelical.org/tcpubs.html#ert](http://www.worldevangelical.org/tcpubs.html#ert)

Typeset by Profile, Culmdale, Rewe, Exeter, Devon EX5 4ES  
and Printed in Great Britain for Paternoster Periodicals,  
PO Box 300, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 0QS  
by Polestar Wheatons Ltd., Exeter, Devon.

# Editorial: The Multi-Faceted Gospel

We are pleased to present two important reports in this issue—the first from the International Consultation between the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance (1993—2002). A full explanation is provided in the Introduction (by the convenor of the WEA Task Force on Ecumenical Issues, Dr G. Vandervelde), and in the Appendix. It is important to note the status of this Report—it is a study document, and therefore we publish it to invite comments that can be forwarded to the Theological Commission, and for discussion amongst the evangelical community generally.

The second report is on a vastly different topic, but one that is equally important for the gospel—a theology of HIV/AIDS by Dr P. Marshall. Originally presented to a conference of theological educators in South Africa, and subsequently revised by the author using input from the conference and elsewhere, it too is presented as a ‘work in progress’. As it stands, it offers a comprehensive theological framework for Christians to consider as they respond to this enormous problem facing the world. The subject matter of both these reports has not diminished in importance since their original preparation and we commend them to our readers for careful consideration.

Our other essays also draw attention to vital matters for the gospel. John P. Davis provides theological and biblical reflection on the relation between the church and the Abrahamic covenant, suggesting that it is a matter of ‘faith not ethnicity’. Then Jeffrey L. Morrow offers a fascinating analysis of the contribution of the writer J.R.R. Tolkien, whose ‘Lord of the Rings’ trilogy continues to receive enormous popular acclaim around the world. Arising out of a deeply committed and highly developed Christian experience, these books, the author argues, can be seen as ‘great Christian works that help feed one’s faith, rather than subvert it’.

The gospel is therefore multi-faceted in nature and application. Our desire is to be ‘good stewards of the manifold grace of God’ (1 Peter 4:10) or as Tyndale put it, ‘the manyfolde grace of God’. So we conclude with a powerful Bible study on the ‘message and messenger of the gospel’ by one of Africa’s gifted Christian leaders, Victor B. Cole. This message was enthusiastically received by the participants of the Lausanne 2004 Forum and we are privileged to share it with our readers as a clarion call to faithful ministry in this age.

**David Parker, Editor**

# Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*

## A Report of the International Consultation between the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance (1993—2002)

Introduced by  
G. Vandervelde

**KEYWORDS:** *Sacraments, ecumenism, authority, mediator, gospel, proselytism, repentance, conversion, liberty*

### Introduction

Relations between Evangelicals and the Roman Catholic Church vary immensely around the globe. In some regions such North America and parts of Europe and Africa, Evangelicals increasingly make common cause with Catholics in confrontation with major ethical and religious challenges, such as abortion, sexual ethics, legislation regarding marriage, genetic engineering (including cloning), and secularism. As Evangelical and Catholic theologians learn more about one another,

they begin to look beyond these urgent social and ethical issues to the faith commitments that unite and divide the two traditions. Despite the many very serious differences between them, Evangelicals often make the somewhat surprising discovery that on the core of the faith, such as the divinity and resurrection of Christ, for example, they have more in common with Roman Catholicism than with much of mainline Protestant theology. In other regions, especially those in which the Roman Catholic Church has a dominant presence, such as Latin America, Southern Europe, and the Philippines, relations between the Catholic Church and Evangelical churches and groups are often tense, if not hostile. Although

---

*The Introduction to this report is written by Dr George Vandervelde, Th.D. (Free University of Amsterdam), convener of the World Evangelical Alliance Task Force on Ecumenical Issues. He is Emeritus Professor of Theology at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto, Canada and continues to teach in the areas of ecclesiology, soteriology and symbolics. He is the author of Original Sin: Two Major Trends in Contemporary Roman Catholic Reinterpretation and has published articles on Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx, native spirituality, Evangelical-Roman Catholic issues, and on the nature, mission and unity of the church.*

even in these regions, one also hears reports of markedly improving relations.

The Report which follows is not designed to resolve the problems or tensions that exist between the Evangelical and Catholic communities. Rather, it proceeds from a strange contradiction, as well as a fundamental conviction. The contradiction: in many regions distinct groups exist that claim the name of Christ as only Saviour, as supreme Reconciler, and as Lord of all, and who hold that the Scriptures are the supreme norm for belief and practice; yet they find themselves in a situation of mutual hostility and alienation. The fundamental conviction: we owe it to ourselves, to one another, and indeed to the One we serve as Lord to work at overcoming whatever barriers hamper his mission in the world today.

As the background document (Appendix 1) explains, early rounds of this Consultation explored the basic issues that have divided Evangelicals and Roman Catholics since the time of the Reformation: Scripture and Tradition, and Justification by Faith (the papers on these issues have been published as indicated). Increasingly, it became evident that such issues come to practical expressions in the different ways in which we understand what it means to belong to Christ and how we experience Christian community or church. For that reason, the document before you now has as one of its foci, 'communion', or 'fellowship'. This first section explores a general framework for understanding the relation between Evangelicals and Catholics, not only as persons but especially as faith communities, as churches. This section elaborates similarities and differences in the

ways in which each community understands communion, fellowship, and church. Within this theological framework, the second section deals with the relations between Evangelicals and Catholics, one might say, on the ground, in day-to-day life. The report does not shy away therefore from tackling what is often a flashpoint for tension and conflict, namely, mission and evangelization, proselytism and religious liberty. Often Evangelical efforts in bringing the gospel to so-called 'nominal Catholics' are considered to be 'sheep stealing' by the Roman Catholic Church. This document makes an initial attempt to clarify this issue and to suggest some practical guidelines for the practice of evangelization.

In evaluating this report, its limited scope and distinct nature need to be kept in mind. The paragraph with the subheading 'The Status of this Report' (immediately preceding Part I) articulates the following qualifications: This report is 1) a study document; 2) submitted for discussion and evaluation; 3) by representatives of the two sponsoring bodies (in the case of the WEA, by a Task Force of the Theological Commission). This document, therefore, is not an authoritative World Evangelical Alliance statement. The report is being published to foster constructive discussion and trenchant critique.

The burden of this document is in the end not words on paper but the course of the Gospel of Christ on the highways and byways, the cities and barrios, the hills and plains of God's planet. For that reason the engagement of the evangelical community at large in the issues explored in this doc-

ument is urgent.

This report has been published in *Origins* 33, no. 19 (October 16, 2003): 310-320. The Report, including appendices, has also been published in *Information Service* (The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity) No. 113 (2003/II/III): 85-101 (A translation appears in the French version of the *Information Service*). It is also available online at <[http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/e-rc/doc/i\\_e-rc\\_report2002.html](http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/e-rc/doc/i_e-rc_report2002.html)>

To facilitate discussion, please refer to the body of the report by paragraph number rather than page number, which varies depending on the source cited.

## The Report

### Preamble

We, the representatives of two Christian traditions deeply divided from each other historically, have been involved in a substantive consultation that we hope will lead to improved relations in the future. This experience for us has been momentous. We come from strong and vital Christian communities. The Catholic Church is the largest Christian communion in the world, with now over one billion members. The Evangelical movement, with its roots in the Reformation, is one of the most dynamic expressions of Christianity today, showing rapid growth in many parts of the world. The World Evangelical Alliance represents some 150 million from among more than 200 million Evangelical Christians. Yet in spite of exceptions over the centuries, from Zinzendorf and Wesley to Schaff

and Congar, both traditions have long lived in isolation from one another. Our communities have been separated by different histories and theologies as well as by unhelpful stereotypes and mutual misunderstandings. This estrangement and misapprehension has occasioned hostility and conflicts that continue to divide the Body of Christ in our own time.

In recent decades, however, a considerable number of Catholics and Evangelicals have been getting to know each other, and have discovered in the process how much they have in common. This change is due in part to situational factors: cultural and political changes in the second half of the twentieth century, the growth of democracy in countries which formerly had repressive, authoritarian governments, the mixing of peoples and confessions in our increasingly diverse cultures, the discovery of common concerns in the area of ethics and in the struggle against secularism. In part, the changing relations between Evangelical and Catholic communities are due to internal developments, for example, in Catholicism, as a result of the *Second Vatican Council* and, among Evangelicals, the impact of the *Lausanne Covenant*. Finally, new attitudes were fostered by far-sighted individuals in both traditions, together with a significant number of initiatives designed to promote greater appreciation and understanding of each other. Billy Graham's ministry stands out here. Most importantly, there is a growing recognition in both our traditions that the spread of the Gospel is hindered by our continuing divisions.

As a result of these changes in our world and in our churches, many

Catholics and Evangelicals have begun talking to and co-operating with each other, including praying together. In the process, they have not only become friends; they have begun to discover each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord. It might be helpful to note some of these formal initiatives, which are described extensively in the appendix.

The first international dialogue between Catholics and Evangelicals began with participants from both sides exploring the subject of mission from 1978 to 1984. This resulted in a 1985 report on their discussions. This international dialogue was sponsored, on the Catholic side, by the *Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity*. Evangelical participants, like John Stott, while drawn from a number of churches and Christian organizations, were not official representatives of any international body.

The present consultations represent an important development in our relationship. For the first time these meetings were sponsored by international bodies on both sides: the *World Evangelical Alliance* and the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*. This initiative eventually resulted in formal consultations beginning in Venice in 1993, and continuing at Tantar, Jerusalem in 1997, Williams Bay, Wisconsin in 1999, Mundelein, Illinois in 2001, and Swanwick, England in 2002.

Initial meetings led us eventually to focus on two general areas: the church and her mission. As the discussion continued, it became clear that a common reflection on the biblical notion of *koinonia* would help us to clarify some convergences and differences between

us on the church (Part I). The focus on mission evolved into reflection on evangelization and the related issues of religious freedom, proselytism and common witness in light of *koinonia* (Part II).

The purpose of these consultations has been to overcome misunderstandings, to seek better mutual understanding of each other's Christian life and heritage, and to promote better relations between Evangelicals and Catholics. This paper is a result of the first series of discussions and deals with a limited number of issues.

In these conversations, which were conducted in a very cordial and open atmosphere, each side has expressed clearly and candidly its own theological convictions and tradition, and listened as the other side did the same. Together they sought to discern whether there were convergences or even some agreements on theological issues over which Evangelicals and Catholics have long been divided, and also on what issues divisions clearly persist.

This consultation presents here the product of its work to the sponsoring bodies, with gratitude for the support they have given to this project.

We hope this study will be fruitful and serve the cause of the Gospel and the glory of our Lord.

#### THE STATUS OF THIS REPORT

The Report published here is the work of an International Consultation between the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance. It is a study document produced by participants in this Consultation. The authorities who appointed the participants

have allowed the Report to be published so that it may be widely discussed. It is not an authoritative declaration of either the Catholic Church or of the World Evangelical Alliance, who will both also evaluate the document.

## PART I

### CATHOLICS, EVANGELICALS, AND *KOINONIA*

#### A. The Church as *koinonia* (Fellowship, Communion)

(1) The use of *koinonia* brings an important biblical term to bear on ecclesiology, as it suggests those things that bind Christians together. *Koinonia* is undoubtedly 'an early and important aspect of the church and its unity'.<sup>1</sup> The biblical word *koinonia* can be translated in various ways: 'fellowship', 'belonging', 'communion', 'participation', 'partnership', or 'sharing in'. Evangelicals often use the term 'fellowship', while Catholics frequently use the term 'communion'.

#### 1. New Testament 'Fellowship'

(2) In the Pauline writings, the term *koinonia* often refers to the relationship of Christians to one another, grounded in their relationship to the divine per-

sons. Paul tells the Corinthian Christians: 'You were called into the fellowship of his [God's] Son, Jesus Christ our Lord' (1 Cor. 1:9). He speaks of 'the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit' (2 Cor. 13:14). Elsewhere he tells his readers that he received 'the right hand of fellowship' from James, Cephas, and John (Gal. 2:9). On another occasion he warns the Corinthians against having fellowship with unbelievers, asking the rhetorical question: 'What fellowship has light with darkness?' (2 Cor. 6:14). Partnership appears to be the meaning in Philippians 1:5-7.

(3) The term *koinonia* occurs also in Acts 2:42, where it again has the meaning of fellowship: 'And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and to the breaking of bread and the prayers.' It is debatable exactly what type of fellowship Luke here has in mind, but it is evidently some kind of association among believers, received from Christ through solidarity with the apostles. It means the sharing of material goods in 2 Corinthians 8:4, 9:13.

(4) The Johannine writings reinforce this sense of *koinonia* as fellowship. The author of the first epistle speaks of proclaiming what he has seen 'that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ' (1 Jn. 1:3). Again in verses 7-8 he refers to fellowship with the Son and among Christians themselves. The fellowship with God in Christ is evidently the basis for the fellowship with other believers, all members in the Body of Christ. They are to be one as the Father and Son in the trinity are one (Jn. 17:11,21).

---

<sup>1</sup> John Reumann, 'Koinonia in Scripture: Survey of Biblical Texts', *On The Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order*, Faith and Order Paper no. 166 (Geneva, 1994), p. 62

## 2. Various Emphases in New Testament Interpretation

(5) For both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics communion with Christ involves a transformative union whereby believers are *'koinonoi* of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world by lust' (2 Pet. 1:4). Catholics tend to interpret *koinonia* in this passage to mean a participation in the divine life and 'nature', while Evangelicals tend to interpret *koinonia* as covenant companionship, as it entails escaping moral corruption and the way of the world. According to many eastern Fathers of the church, the believer's participation in the life of Christ and the church leads to the process of the believer's divinization (*theosis, deificatio*). Evangelicals have reservations about the notion of *theosis*: the word is not found in the Bible and it suffers, they feel, from too much ambiguity. It appears to suggest that believers shall possess the essence of deity — a meaning which Catholic doctrine too denies. Evangelicals agree that the redemptive grace on the one hand restores the original godlikeness that was marred and defaced by human sin (Col. 3:10), and on the other hand that the Spirit transforms believers into the likeness of the Second Adam, from glory to glory, (1 Cor. 15: 48, 49; 2 Cor. 3:18), a process that will reach completion only when Christ, the Lord and Saviour, comes from heaven (Philp. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 5:23-24).

(6) Catholics believe that sacraments are Christ's instruments to effect the transformative union with the divine nature (1 Cor. 12:12-13, where they see water-baptism, and 10:16-17, Eucharist). In passages such as these

they hear other (Catholics would say deeper), more sacramental and participatory connotations in the word *'koinonoi'* than are expressed by the word 'fellowship'. Many Evangelicals consider the sacraments to be dominical means of grace or 'ordinances' which are 'visible words' that proclaim (*katagellete*, 1 Cor. 11:26) or are signs and seals of the grace of union with Christ — grace to be received and enjoyed on the sole condition of personal faith.

## 3. Perspectives on '*communio sanctorum*'

(7) While the earliest rendering of the term *communio sanctorum* in the Apostles' Creed has been translated as 'communion of holy persons' (saints), this language has been translated as a reference to 'holy things' (sacraments).<sup>2</sup> However, the doctrinal significance of *communio sanctorum* (*koinonia ton hagion*) was not relegated to one interpretation only. Later western appropriation of the concept of divinization emphasized it as a participation in the Eucharist. Evangelicals prefer to translate *communio sanctorum* as 'the fellowship of holy persons' or 'of saints', the 'saints' being all those

---

<sup>2</sup> On the phrase '*communio sanctorum*' in the Apostles' Creed see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1972), pp. 389-90. This sacramental interpretation is favoured by Stephen Benko, *The Meaning of Communion of Saints* (Naperville, Ill, 1964) and Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries* (St. Louis, 1966), chapter 1 and excursuses 1, 2, and 3.

who truly belong to Jesus Christ by faith; they understand 'communion' as the bond that binds all Christians in all generations.

(8) Evangelicals, historically, have not given the same place to the sacraments nor connected sanctification so directly with them as Catholics have. They maintain the 'forensic' (referring to the courts of law) meaning of justification, and tend to prefer the vocabulary of drama and law. The Bible, as they read it, is more favourable to categories such as covenant-breaking and covenant-renewal, condemnation and acquittal, enmity and reconciliation, than to the category of participation in being. But they do affirm with the apostle Paul that anyone who is in Christ is a 'new creation' (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). The Holy Spirit effects a radical change, a new birth from above.

(9) Catholics and Evangelicals anticipate perfect communion in the Kingdom to be ushered in with the final coming of Jesus. In the light of this expectation, Catholics and Evangelicals should look to a deeper communion in this world, even if they disagree, between and among themselves, on the means by which this might be achieved, and on the extent to which it can be realized prior to the return of Christ. Since the biblical texts are authoritative for both Catholics and Evangelicals, they provide a solid foundation for our conversations. The growing familiarity with biblical categories on both sides, combined with recent reinterpretations of sacramental theology, suggests that *koinonia* continues to be a promising topic for further explorations in our conversations.

## B. Our Respective Understandings of the Church and of Other Christians

### 1. Recent Developments

(10) In the Second Vatican Council, Catholics elaborated their distinctive understanding of the nature of the Church and also their relationships to other Christians. Evangelicals also have explored this area in major conferences in recent decades on the topic of missions. It will be useful to describe the views in the two communities, before pointing out the implications for mutual understanding.

(11) The Second Vatican Council marked a development in the ecclesiological self-understanding of the Catholic Church. Rather than positing a simple identity between the Church of Christ and itself, *Lumen Gentium* teaches that 'the Church of Christ ...subsists in the Catholic Church' (LG 8).<sup>3</sup> The Evangelical movement on the other hand, received its characteristic modern shape from the influence of the eighteenth and nineteenth century revivals (preceded by pietism and Puritanism): these revivals crossed denominational boundaries and relativized their importance. From the Roman Catholic side the recognition of the 'others' as belonging to Christ, takes the form of an emphasis on truly Christian elements and endowments in their communities; and from the Evangelical side, on the acknowledged presence of

---

<sup>3</sup> List of Abbreviations is found at the end of the Report.

true believers indwelt by Christ's Spirit among Catholics.

## 2. Catholic Views

(12) Vatican II in its Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) speaks of the bonds between Catholics and other Christians in these terms:

The unique Church of Christ...constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in union with that successor, although many elements of sanctification and of truth can be found outside her visible structure (LG 8).

The Church recognizes that in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptized, are honored with the name of Christian, though they do not possess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter. For there are many who honor sacred Scripture, taking it as a norm of belief and of action, and who show a true religious zeal. They lovingly believe in God the Father Almighty and in Christ, Son of God and Savior...

Likewise, we can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them also He gives His gifts and graces, and is thereby operative among them with His sanctifying power. Some indeed He has strengthened to the extent of the shedding of their blood (LG 15).

(13) In its *Decree on Ecumenism* (*Uni-*

*tatis Redintegratio*), Vatican II brings the concept of ecclesial elements into correlation with that of *koinonia*. The decree illustrates the Catholic perspective on full communion. The Holy Spirit, it affirms, 'brings about that marvelous communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity' (UR 2). The Decree goes on to say that the Spirit brings about and perfects this wonderful union by means of the faithful preaching of the Gospel, the administration of the sacraments, and the loving exercise of pastoral authority (cf. UR 2).

(14) In the following paragraph the *Decree on Ecumenism* clarifies relationships with other communities and broaches the notion of 'imperfect communion', which is so vital for contemporary interchurch relations. The Decree states that some Christians have become separated from full communion with the Catholic Church but remain in a real, though imperfect, communion with it because 'some, even very many, of the most significant elements or endowments which together go to build up and give life to the church herself can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: the written word of God; the life of grace, faith, hope, and charity, along with other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit and visible elements' (UR 3).

(15) In a later section of the *Decree on Ecumenism* the same notion of imperfect communion is applied specifically to Protestant communities. The Council here speaks of belief in the Holy Trinity, and of confession of Jesus Christ as God and Lord, and as sole Mediator between God and man (cf. UR

20). It then goes on to mention love and veneration for Holy Scripture, affirming that 'the sacred utterances are precious instruments in the mighty hand of God for attaining that unity which the Savior holds out to all men' (*UR* 21). Baptism properly conferred 'constitutes a sacramental bond of unity linking all who have been reborn by means of it...But baptism, of itself, is only a beginning, a point of departure, for it is wholly directed toward the acquiring of fullness of life in Christ' (*UR* 22). Pope John Paul II reaffirms the teaching of Vatican II on the 'many elements of sanctification and truth' in other Christian communities and on 'the communion, albeit imperfect, which exists between them and the Catholic Church' (*UUS* 11).

(16) All of these factors give concreteness to the use of the concept of *koinonia* by Roman Catholics. They make it clear that the ecclesial elements in question find expression in acts of faith, hope, and charity. The degree of communion cannot be measured by outward and visible means alone because communion depends on the reality of life in the Spirit.

### 3. Evangelical Views

(17) Evangelicals similarly emphasize that the most important bond is the life of the Spirit which flows from union with Christ. This bond is created when the Gospel is received in faith and is foundational for the visible expression of the oneness or *koinonia* of all Christians. For Evangelicals the visibility of the church is subordinate to this primary truth. *The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration* confesses:

All Christians are called to unity in

love and unity in truth. As Evangelicals who derive our very name from the Gospel, we celebrate this great good news of God's saving work in Jesus Christ as the true bond of Christian unity, whether among organized churches and denominations or in the many transdenominational cooperative enterprises of Christians together.

The Bible declares that all who truly trust in Christ and his Gospel are sons and daughters of God through grace, and hence are our brothers and sisters in Christ.<sup>4</sup>

As the *Lausanne Covenant* of 1974 notes:

World evangelization requires the whole church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world. The church is at the very center of God's cosmic purpose and is his appointed means of spreading the Gospel. But a church which preaches the cross must itself be marked by the cross. It becomes a stumbling block to evangelism when it betrays the Gospel or lacks a living faith in God, a genuine love for people, or scrupulous honesty in all things including promotion and finance. The church is the community of God's people rather than an institution, and must not be identified with any particular culture, social or political system, or human ideology (Jn. 17:18; 20:21; Mt. 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; 20:27; Eph. 1:9,

---

<sup>4</sup> 'A Call to Evangelical Unity: "The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration"', *Christianity Today* 43:7 (June 14, 1999), pp. 49-56.

10; 3:9-11; Gal. 6:14, 17; 2 Co 6:3,4; 2 Tim. 2:19-2J; Phil. 1:27) (*Lausanne* 6).

Evangelicals adhere to the Reformation doctrine of the 'invisible church' (though with varying degrees of emphasis), without diminishing the importance of the visible church, as it is implied in the *Amsterdam Declaration*:

The one, universal church is a transnational, transcultural, trans-denominational and multi-ethnic family of the household of faith. In the widest sense, the church includes all the redeemed of all the ages, being the one body of Christ extended throughout time as well as space. Here in the world, the church becomes visible in all local congregations that meet to do together the things that according to Scripture the church does (*Amsterdam* 9).

(18) Evangelicals insist (as do Roman Catholics) that disciplinary and doctrinal criteria should be used for expressions in ecclesial life of the unity we have in Christ. 'Church discipline, biblically based and under the direction of the Holy Spirit is essential to the well being and ministry of God's people.'<sup>5</sup> In a world and in churches marred by human failure, church discipline may demand the curtailing of concrete forms of fellowship even in cases where offenders against the apostolic

teaching are acknowledged as brothers or sisters (cf. 2 Thess. 3:14-15). This applies to deviations in all spheres of life, both in the confession of faith as well as in behaviour, which cannot be ultimately separated. Some Evangelicals hold that the concrete possibilities of fellowship depend on the degrees of agreement on the apostolic testimony as handed down in the New Testament.

(19) The Manila Affirmations depict the resulting attitudes among Evangelicals today:

Our reference to 'the whole church' is not a presumptuous claim that the universal church and the evangelical community are synonymous. For we recognize that there are many churches which are not part of the evangelical movement. Evangelical attitudes to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches differ widely. Some Evangelicals are praying, talking, studying Scripture and working with these churches. Others are strongly opposed to any form of dialogue or cooperation with them. All are aware that serious theological differences between us remain. Where appropriate, and so long as biblical truth is not compromised, cooperation may be possible in such areas as Bible translation, the study of contemporary theological and ethical issues, social work and political action. We wish to make it clear, however, that common evangelism demands a common commitment to the biblical Gospel (*Manila* 9).

---

5 'The Chicago Call: An Appeal to Evangelicals' (1977), *Growing Consensus: Church Dialogues in the United States, 1962-1991*, Joseph Burgess and Jeffrey Gros eds. (New York 1995), p. 579.

#### 4. What of the Church Do We Recognize in One Another?

(20) We as Catholics and Evangelicals share Sacred Scripture<sup>6</sup> and belief in its inspiration by the Holy Spirit. We affirm the unique mediatorial role of Christ, his incarnation, his death and resurrection for our salvation. We affirm together our faith in the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are both able to pray the Lord's Prayer and confess the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.<sup>7</sup> We affirm the Gospel call to conversion, to a disciplined life in the grace of Jesus Christ, and the ultimate promise of eternal reward. We recognize a Christian responsibility for service and the promotion of justice in the world. We share a common hope of Christ's return, as judge and redeemer, to consummate our salvation. We can commemorate together those who have witnessed by their blood to this common faith and now celebrate full communion before the face of our divine Saviour.

(21) One of the results of interchurch cooperation and dialogue has been a greater appreciation by separated Christians of one another. (A gradual move towards a greater recognition of the ecclesial status of other Christian communities marks modern and con-

temporary developments). For centuries, in ways heavily influenced by polemics and religious wars, the identification of and the incorporation into the true church were simplistically considered to be an all-or-nothing affair. One was either in the true church or in a false institution or a sect. Either one was a member in the full sense of the word, or one was outside of the church and deprived of all hope of salvation. Yet the awareness of spiritual complexity was not entirely repressed. The Roman Catholic Church maintained the validity of the baptism performed by heretics and also acknowledged a 'baptism of desire'. The sixteenth century reformers did not deny the presence of elements of the true church in Roman Catholicism. Though at times Luther spoke of the pope as anti-Christ, he recognized remnants of the church in the Roman Communion. Calvin could write of his Roman Catholic opponents, 'these muddlers will labor to no avail as they deck out their synagogue with the title church', yet he acknowledges traces (*vestigia*), remnants (*reliquias*), marks (*symbola*), and signs (*signa*) of the church under the papacy; churches in the Roman Communion may be called churches 'to the extent that the Lord wonderfully preserves in them a remnant of his people however woefully dispersed and scattered'. And early proponents of religious toleration were found among the extremely diverse groups often referred to as the 'Radical Reformation'. Though Anabaptists were painfully persecuted on all sides, Calvin exercised a nuanced judgment on their doctrine; later they benefited from the protection of such a prelate as the Prince-Bishop of Basel.

---

<sup>6</sup> We share the majority of biblical books, but the Catholic canon includes also the books Protestants call 'The Apocrypha' and Catholics the 'Deutero-canonical' books.

<sup>7</sup> 'Confessing the One Faith: An Evangelical Response by World Evangelical Fellowship Task Force on Ecumenical Issues', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 18 (1994), pp. 35-46.

## 5. A Common Challenge

(22) In this section, we have come to recognize, with the help of God's Spirit, the *koinonia* with the life of the Trinity that both of our communities enjoy. We see it, therefore, as incumbent upon both of us to move from this singular condition of unity with the life of the Trinity into an experienced unity with one another. To that end we need to take the actions which will move us from this rediscovery to forge the ecclesial bonds that will express this already bestowed unity. If God has not been dealing with us as if we were apart from him, why should we continue to live as if we were apart from one another?

## C. Some Dimensions of the Church

### 1. Origins of the Church

(23) Evangelicals and Catholics both see in the Pentecost event the emergence of the church of the new covenant (Acts 2). The presence of persons from every nation at Pentecost represents the universal mission of the church. They agree that this church is built on the foundation of the prophet and apostles, with Christ as the cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). They recognize in the evangelizing mission of the apostles the founding of local churches. The communion of local churches in the New Testament was served by the ministry of the apostles and by the meeting of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). Support of one another, letters of recommendation, the collections for other churches, and mutual hospitality char-

acterize this communion among churches. Evangelicals and Roman Catholics recognize the importance of subsequent developments in the life of the church, but give different weight and appreciation to these developments.

## 2. The Church Local and Universal

### a. Evangelical and Catholic Perspectives

(24) For Evangelicals today the 'local church' designates the congregation in a particular place. For Catholics a 'local' or 'particular' church refers to a diocese, composed of a number of parishes, with a bishop at the centre, assisted by his presbyters and other ministers of pastoral service to the faithful for the sake of the Gospel.

(25) Catholics see the work of the Holy Spirit in a number of significant developments in the early Church. These include the understanding of bishops as successors to the apostles; the emergence of the three-fold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon; the clarification of the apostolic faith especially by ecumenical councils and the universal creeds; and the gradual acknowledgement of the effective leadership of the bishop of Rome within the whole church. Even from early times, the Bishop of Rome had a prominent role in fostering the communion of local churches over which bishops presided, the initial expressions of a primacy that developed over the centuries. Since Vatican II there has been greater stress on the mutual relationship between the local churches and the church of Rome.

(26) For their part, Evangelicals are overwhelmingly found in Protestant and Pentecostal churches, which have generally placed primary emphasis on local congregations: the place in which the word of God is proclaimed, the sacraments are administered, and God's people are gathered. Evangelicals live in a variety of church structures. Churches whose origin lies in the 'magisterial' Reformation (e.g., Lutheran, and Reformed) as well as Anglicans and Methodists, have a strong sense of the universality of the church in time and space, but the way they function stresses the regional or national body and, for example, gives significance to regional or national synods. Nearly all other churches have espoused congregationalism which concentrates responsibility in the local community. This community is the concrete embodiment of the *koinonia* of the Spirit. It is the locus of spiritual life, mutual upbuilding through the diversity of gifts, and training for service in the world. The free churches express solidarity through international agencies or alliances, denominational or interdenominational. Anabaptists in particular have had a strong tradition of community life; a vigilant discipline makes the assembly into a closely knit family of faith. Throughout history all these churches have had to fight divisive tendencies and, in the context of secularization, the destructive influences of individualism. The *Lausanne Covenant* candidly acknowledges: 'We confess that our testimony has sometimes been marred by sinful individualism and needless duplication. We pledge ourselves to seek a deeper unity in truth, worship, holiness and mission' (*Lausanne* 7).

(27) Whereas Catholic ecclesiology reserves certain sacramental functions to bishops who are understood to have received the fullness of the sacrament of orders, most Evangelical churches concentrate leadership more specifically in the ministry of the 'pastor,' whose role is considered to be that of the *episkopos/presbyteros* of New Testament times. (The pastor may be the 'teaching elder' in association with the 'ruling elders' of the church or parish, 1 Tim. 5:17). Other Evangelicals, even among a few free churches, have distinct ministries of oversight, but the difference is slight: the bishop or superintendent is charged with administrative tasks, but is not considered to have particular sacramental roles, a concept foreign to the Evangelical interpretation of ministry.

(28) Global fellowship among Evangelicals is typically expressed by means of loose networks of world-wide associations (among which the WEA may lay claim to best-grounded representative legitimacy) and parachurch organizations (such as the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students). These entities provide valuable channels of communication and tools for cooperation.

(29) On the Catholic side, Vatican II reemphasizes the key importance of the local church (diocese) as the place where the word is preached and the sacraments are administered. The church reveals herself most clearly when the people are gathered about the altar under the presidency of the bishop, with the assistance of the other clergy (cf. *SC* 41; and also *LG* 26). At every Eucharist the unity of the whole church is indicated by the presider's expression of the union with the local

bishop, other bishops, and especially the bishop of Rome as the centre of the whole communion.<sup>8</sup> The bishops in national and regional conferences are called upon to represent their particular churches. Catholics speak of the universal church, like the regional church, as a communion of particular churches under their respective bishops and in communion with the bishop of Rome. They recognize, however, that the church of Christ is not exclusively identified with the Catholic Church (cf. *LG* 8).

#### b. Convergences and Differences Between Catholics and Evangelicals

(30) While certainly not eliminating the differences with evangelical Protestantism, these recent developments in Catholic ecclesiology facilitate mutual understanding. On the national and regional levels, Catholic *Episcopal Conferences* and *Synods of Oriental Catholic Churches* are able to enter into conversations with national and regional Evangelical churches, alliances and organizations. Also,

diocesan bishops are able to relate to the regional evangelical officials as their counterparts, even if they are not bishops. There is a certain convergence with the renewed emphasis of Catholics on local church and of Evangelicals on worldwide fellowship.

(31) Catholics speak of a reciprocity between the universal and the particular church, but they do not view the universal church as a federation of local churches. There is a sense in which Catholics can admit the priority of the local church since, in the words of Vatican II: 'In and from such individual churches there comes into being the one and only Catholic Church' (*LG* 23). But to avoid misunderstanding, the Council also affirms that each particular church is 'fashioned after the model of the universal church' (*ibid.*). The biblical evidence, as interpreted in Catholic theology, indicates that the church originated as a single community, into which people are incorporated by faith and baptism.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> This style of ecclesiology points to a vision of the universal church as a network of local churches in communion. According to the *Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops 1985*, 'The ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of the Council's documents. *Koinonia/communio*, founded on the Sacred Scripture, has been held in great honour in the early Church and in the Oriental Churches to this day. Thus, much was done by the Second Vatican Council so that the Church as communion might be more clearly understood and concretely incorporated into life' [*Relatio Finalis*, II, C), 1]).

---

<sup>9</sup> The Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in its letter to bishops on *Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion* emphasizes the priority of the universal over the particular church (Cf. *Origins* 22 [June 25, 1992] pp. 108-112). In his presentation on *Lumen Gentium* at the International Meeting on the reception of Vatican II, February 27, 2000, Cardinal Ratzinger explained that the community of the 120 on whom the Holy Spirit descended (Acts 2:1-4) was a renewal of the community of the Twelve, who had been commissioned to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth. This community was the New Israel. Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, 'L'ecclesiologia della Costituzione Lumen Gentium', *Il Concilio Vaticano II, Recezione e attualità alla luce del Giubileo*, Rino Fisichella (ed.), (Milano, 2000) pp. 66-81.

(32) Evangelicals understand the church to be called into being by the Word (*creatura verbi*). The Word is revealed in Christ, written in Scripture, and received through hearing. The Word calls forth faith and a community of faith in time and space, a visible church. But final judgment belongs to God as to believers and unbelievers within the visible church. God knows his own. 'Here in the world, the church becomes visible in all local congregations that meet to do together the things that according to Scripture the church does. Christ is the head of the church. Everyone who is personally united to Christ by faith belongs to his body and by the Spirit is united with every other true believer in Jesus' (*Amsterdam* 9).

(33) Evangelicals, like Catholics, recognize the value of worldwide fellowship, but because of different theological presuppositions and different interpretations of certain biblical passages, they have a different view of the relationship between the universal church and local churches. Evangelicals understand by 'universal church' all those everywhere and in all ages who believe and trust in Christ for salvation. 'All' includes believing Roman Catholics. Evangelicals have made use of Luther's distinction between the church invisible and the church visible. They affirm the universal church whose bond of unity, the Spirit of Christ, is invisible (Eph. 4:3-4); they stress incorporation by 'faith alone', a faith by which all share in the gift of the Spirit (Gal. 3:2). Christ, however, also willed the founding of visible churches into which people are incorporated by (water) baptism. While primarily local, these congregations may seek federa-

tions and alliances as means to express the universal character of the church's nature and mission.

(34) The visible structural and organizational manifestations of the church are shaped by particular historical situations, and can change. In the eyes of most Evangelicals the Bible provides no rigid pattern for organizing the church in every time and place. They find in the New Testament a considerable degree of variety in models of ministry and church order. In distinction from Catholic ecclesiology, Evangelicals thus affirm a variety of forms of church order, but these differences do not impede fellowship or membership in the invisible church.

(35) Most Evangelicals agree that the universal church, not being a visible institution, is concretely expressed in the visible churches in particular times and places, and the translocal bonds they cultivate. They acknowledge that the correspondence between visible and invisible is not perfect. For example, 'false brethren' may be found (Gal. 2:4) who do not really belong (1 Jn. 2:19). While the relationship between membership in the visible and invisible church, and baptism varies among Evangelicals, these differences do not hamper fellowship and collaboration. Visible communities have been endowed by Christ with institutions so that they may build themselves up and fulfill their mission in the world.

### 3. The Combination of the Personal and Institutional in *Koinonia*

#### a. An Ordered Community of Persons

(36) In the New Testament witness, Evangelicals and Catholics recognize an ordered community of persons, sharing a common faith and mission, given leadership, under Christ, by the apostles (1 Cor. 11-14; Rom. 12; Eph. 4). We recognize that there are differentiated ministries articulated in the epistles (1 Pet. 5; 1 Tim. 3; Titus), though we value them differently, and make different judgments as to their continuity in the contemporary church. However, we both affirm order and discipline as a framework of ecclesial communion (1 Cor. 14:33, 40).

(37) The idea of the church as communion has emerged from a return to a rich vein of biblical and patristic material. It has also been influenced by more personalist approaches in the modern world, against exaggerated forms of institutionalism and individualism. Sociologists have long distinguished between society and community. In early twentieth-century ecclesiology this gave rise to a dualism between a church of law and a church of love. Pius XII, in his encyclical on the Mystical Body, taught that this opposition does not obtain in the church, which is both a mystical union and an organized society.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Pius XII, Encyclical *Mystici corporis Christi*, 79.

#### b. Catholic Views

(38) Vatican II in its Constitution on the Church, follows essentially the teaching of Pius XII on this matter. It describes the church as a single interlocking reality ('*unam realitatem complexam*' [LG 8]), that is both visible and invisible, mystical and hierarchical. But for the Council the visible dimension serves the invisible dimension of the church. The church is divinely endowed with doctrines, sacraments, and ministries for the purpose of bringing about and signifying a supernatural communion of life, love, and truth among the members (cf. LG 14, 18, 20, 21). The Council presents the church itself as a sacrament (LG 1).

(39) Vatican II's move toward a more collegial ecclesiology shows a greater emphasis on the personal. Whereas Vatican I spoke of the pope as exercising jurisdiction over the other bishops of the Catholic communion, Vatican II clarifies this earlier teaching by saying that bishops must be in 'hierarchical communion' with the pope in order to exercise their powers of teaching and shepherding their flocks (cf. LG 22; CD 5). The concept of 'hierarchical communion' does not eliminate the juridical aspect but requires government through dialogue and consensus rather than command.

#### c. Evangelical Views

(40) In general, Evangelicals hold that the church is primarily a community of persons and only secondarily an institution. Abraham Kuyper, for instance, declares: The church 'is not a salvific agency that would supply grace as medicine, not a mystical order that would magically act on lay people. She

is nothing else than *believing, confessing, persons*.<sup>11</sup> The *Lausanne Covenant* of 1974 asserts: 'The church is the community of God's people rather than an institution, and must not be identified with any particular culture, social or political system or human ideology' (*Lausanne* 6). However, most Evangelicals emphatically maintain the requirement of order and discipline and affirm the institutional dimension of church life.

#### d. Some Mutual Observations

(41) Catholics and Evangelicals experience a convergence in the understanding of the way that order and discipline serve the *koinonia* of the church. Catholics have begun to reemphasize the importance of the personal in understanding the church. Evangelicals show an increasing appreciation of visible expressions of unity in the life of the church beyond the bounds of their own denomination. Such a convergence in our understanding of biblical *koinonia* offers promise for a continuation of the dialogue.

### D. Preparing for a Different Future

(42) There are, then, differences between the convictions of Catholics and Evangelicals. These differences, however, do not amount to simple opposition and have been fruitfully examined in our conversations. Our mutual understanding has opened avenues for further dialogue.

(43) As we complete these reflections we realize again the impact that our divisions has made on people that we serve. It is not possible to reverse history, but it is possible to prepare for a different future.

(44) We realize the need for a spirit of repentance before God because we have not made sufficient efforts to heal the divisions that are a scandal to the Gospel. We pray that God grant us a spirit of *metanoia*. We need to continue to study and face issues which have separated us. We need to examine also the practices that uncritically continue the biases of the past.

(45) Could we not ask ourselves whether we sufficiently understand the levels of unity that we already share? For example, during the Mass, when Catholics hear the words of the canon: 'to strengthen in faith and love your pilgrim Church on earth, your servant Pope..., our bishop ..., and all the bishops with the clergy and the entire people your Son has gained for you', do they understand that among those whom the 'Son has gained' for the Father, are the Christians from whom they are separated and with whom, since Christ also redeemed them, they share deep bonds of Christian life? And when Evangelicals intercede for the life, mission, and unity of 'the Church', do they genuinely understand this church to include Catholics?

(46) In a spirit of humility, we bring our concerns and our hopes to the Lord.

---

11 Abraham Kuyper, *Het Calvinisme*, (Kampen, Kok [1899]), pp. 53-54.

## PART II

### CATHOLICS, EVANGELICALS, AND EVANGELIZATION IN LIGHT OF *KOINONIA*

(47) We now turn to issues of evangelization, proselytism, and religious freedom to explore them in the context of a theology of *koinonia*. In doing this we have learned from some of the insights of other dialogues on these issues and have built on them.

(48) Evangelicals and Catholics agree that every Christian has the right and obligation to share and spread the faith. 'It is contrary to the message of Christ, to the ways of God's grace and to the personal character of faith that any means be used which would reduce or impede the freedom of a person to make a basic Christian commitment' (B 34). Since evangelization is a focus of this section, we can now indicate briefly how Catholics and Evangelicals understand this responsibility.

#### A. Our Respective Views on Evangelization/Evangelism

##### 1. A Catholic View

(49) Catholics view Evangelization in the context of the one Mission of the Church. In this regard, 'evangelization is a complex process involving many elements as, for example, a renewal of human nature, witness, public proclamation, wholehearted acceptance of, and entrance into, the community of the church, the adoption of the outward signs and of apostolic works' (EN 24).

(50) 'Evangelization will always con-

tain, as the foundation, the center and the apex of its whole dynamic power, this explicit declaration: In Jesus Christ ...salvation is offered to every human person as the gift of the grace and mercy of God Himself' (EN 27; cf. RM 44). It involves proclamation of this good news, aiming at Christian conversion of men and women (cf. RM 44-46). But it involves also efforts 'to convert both the individual consciences of men and their collective consciences, all the attitudes in which they are engaged and, finally, their lives and the whole environment which surrounds them' (EN 18). Thus 'evangelization is to be achieved...in depth, going to the very center and roots of life. The Gospel must impregnate the culture and the whole way of life of man...' (EN 20). Through inculturation the church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures, 'transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within' (RM 52; cf. EN 20).

(51) There is a diversity of activities in the *Church's one mission* according to the different circumstances in which it is carried out. Looking at today's world from the viewpoint of evangelization, we can distinguish three situations. (a) People, groups and socio-cultural contexts in which Christ and his Gospel are not known. In such a context Catholics speak of mission *ad gentes*. (b) Christian communities with adequate and solid Ecclesial structures; they are fervent in their faith and in Christian living, in which participation in the sacraments is basic (cf. EN 47). In these communities the church carries out her activities and pastoral

care. (c) The intermediate situation, for example, in countries with ancient Christian roots, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith. In this case what is needed is a new evangelization or a 're-evangelization'. The boundaries between these three 'are not clearly definable, and it is unthinkable to create barriers between them or to put them into water-tight compartments' (*RM* 34). There is a growing interdependence which exists between these various saving activities in the church.

## 2. An Evangelical View

(52) For Evangelicals, the heart and core of mission is proclamation. However, it is the core, not the totality of the church mission within the divine Plan of redemption. The *Lausanne Covenant* refers to this comprehensive mission as 'evangelization' (*Lausanne*, Introduction) and places it within a trinitarian framework: 'We affirm our belief in the one eternal God, Creator (Is. 40:28) and Lord of the world, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19), who governs all things according to the purpose of his will (Eph. 1:1). He has been sending forth a people for himself (Acts 15:14), and sending his people back into the world (Jn. 17:18) to be his servants and witnesses, for the extension of his kingdom, the building up of Christ's body, and the glory of his name (Eph 4:12)' (*Lausanne* 1).

(53) The *Lausanne Covenant* describes mission in its most inclusive sense as 'Christian presence in the world' (*Lausanne* 4), which consists of 'sacrificial service' and entails a 'deep and costly penetration of the world', and a permeation of 'non-Christian society' (*Lau-*

*sanne* 6). Because followers of Christ are engaged in the mission of the triune God, who is 'both the Creator and Judge of all', Christians 'should share his concern for justice' (Gen. 18:25) and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression (Ps. 45:7; Is. 1:17). Because all human beings are created in the image of God, 'every person, regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex or age (Lev. 19:18; Lk. 6:27,35), has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited' (Jas 3:9; *Lausanne* 5). When one is born again one is born into Christ's kingdom 'and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness (Mt. 5:20; Mt. 6:33) in the midst of an unrighteous world' (*ibid*).

(54) Although the mission of the triune God is as broad as 'God's cosmic purpose' (*Lausanne* 6) and therefore calls God's people into this all-embracing mission, Evangelicals are particularly concerned to keep proclamation front and centre. Accordingly, the *Lausanne Covenant* circumscribes 'evangelism itself' as 'the proclamation of the historical, Biblical Christ as Savior (1 Cor. 1:23; 2 Cor. 4:5) and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and to be reconciled to God' (2 Cor. 5:11, 20; *Lausanne* 4). Moreover, *Lausanne* forcefully asserts the primacy of evangelism as proclamation: 'In the Church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary.' A subsequent *World Evangelical Fellowship* statement again stresses the crucial role of evangelism. Yet, the document does not treat evangelism 'as a separate theme, because we see it as

an integral part of our total Christian response to human need' (Mt. 28:18-21; *Consultation on the Church in Response to Human Need*. Wheaton, 1983, Introduction). Clearly, the 'Great Commission' is here seen as a call to holistic mission, with at its centre calling all people to believe in Jesus Christ.

### B. Old Tensions in a New Context of *Koinonia*

(55) It is our common belief that God has sent the Holy Spirit into the world to effect the reconciliation of the world to God. Those to whom the Spirit is sent participate in this mission of the Spirit. The heart of the mission of the Spirit is *koinonia*, a communion of persons in the communion of God, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit.

(56) The real *koinonia* we already share gives rise to our mutual concern to view conjointly the issues of religious freedom and proselytism that have divided us. We believe that the two issues of religious liberty and proselytism must not be treated as totally separable areas but must be firmly linked and considered jointly as related concerns, seen in the context of the meaning of evangelization and the possibility of common witness. Evangelical and Catholic Christians can now recognize that they share a real but imperfect communion with each other, and are able to take modest steps toward a more complete communion in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The interrelated components necessary for increasing *koinonia* are repentance, conversion, and commitment, in which we commit ourselves to the conver-

gence that has already begun in our life together.

(57) The first component is *repentance*, a radical turning away from the habits of mind and heart that fall short of God's purposes and design. Those purposes are that there be a communion between persons and God, and between communities whose unity is authored by the Spirit. God intends that the church be the main instrument for the *koinonia* of all peoples in God. Therefore, the reconciliation of our Christian communities is urgent.

(58) The second component for increasing *koinonia* is *conversion* in which by faith we turn to God in Christ and his saving message. Christian conversion itself is threefold: moral, intellectual, and religious. In moral conversion we are freed by grace to value what God values and obey what God demands. In intellectual conversion we learn and embrace the truth. In religious conversion we come to abide in the love of God.

(59) The third component that the Spirit enables is a turning to one another in our *commitment* to proclaim the Gospel. Catholics and Evangelicals are striving to learn how to love one another in our efforts at evangelization. There are signs of convergence on how we are to participate in the mission of the Spirit in our sharing of the good news. Our two traditions have insights into the contents of this inexhaustible source. These insights need to be retained in the work of evangelization that we undertake respectively, so as to complement and affirm one another's efforts.

## 1. Repentance: From What Are We Turning?

(60) Catholics and Evangelicals are called to pray for grace as we come to a better understanding of the will of Christ, which our past relationships have not reflected (P 108). Our divisions in the past have led to conflicts in evangelization.

But, at Manila, 1989, Evangelicals exhorted one another:

Evangelism and unity are closely related in the New Testament. Jesus prayed that his people's oneness might reflect his own oneness with the Father, in order that the world might believe in him, and Paul exhorted the Philippians to 'contend as one person for the faith of the Gospel'. In contrast to this biblical vision, we are ashamed of the suspicions and rivalries, the dogmatism over non-essentials, the power-struggles and empire-building which spoil our evangelistic witness (*Manila* 9).

And Pope John Paul II, on behalf of Catholics, asked God' forgiveness for sins against unity with the following prayer:

Merciful Father,  
 on the night before his Passion  
 your Son prayed for the unity of  
 those  
 who believe in him:  
 in disobedience to his will,  
 however,  
 believers have opposed one  
 another, becoming divided,  
 and have mutually condemned one  
 another and  
 fought against one another.  
 We urgently implore your

forgiveness  
 and beseech the gift of a repentant  
 heart,  
 so that all Christians, reconciled  
 with you and with one another,  
 will be able, in one body and in  
 one spirit,  
 to experience anew the joy of full  
 communion.  
 We ask this through Christ our  
 Lord.<sup>12</sup>

(61) Concerning 'proselytism,' it should be pointed out that the understanding of the word has changed considerably in recent years in some circles. In the Bible the word proselyte was devoid of negative connotations. The term referred to someone apart from Israel who, by belief in Yahweh and acceptance of the law, became a member of the Jewish community. It carried the positive meaning of being a convert to Judaism (Ex. 12:48-49). Christianity took over this positive and unobjectionable meaning to describe a person who converted from paganism. Until the twentieth century, mission work and proselytism were largely synonymous and without objectionable connotations (B 32, 33). It is only in the twentieth century that the term has come to be applied to winning members from each (B 33), as an illicit form of evangelism (P 90). At least, in some Evangelical circles proselytism is not a

---

<sup>12</sup> Cf. John Paul II, 'Universal Prayer for Forgiveness, III. Confession of the sins which have harmed the unity of the Body of Christ', during the Liturgy of First Sunday of Lent, St. Peter's Basilica, (Vatican City, March 12, 2000). See: Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City, *Information Service* 103 (2000/I-II), p. 56.

pejorative term; in Catholic and most ecumenical circles it is. The attempt to 'win members from each other' (B 33) by unworthy means is negative and pejorative proselytism. Members of our communions have been guilty of proselytism in this negative sense. It should be avoided.

(62) We affirm therefore 'that the following things should be avoided: offers to temporal or material advantages... improper use of situations of distress... using political, social and economic pressure as a means of obtaining conversion... casting unjust and uncharitable suspicion on other denominations; comparing the strengths and ideals of one community with the weakness and practices of another community' (B 36). This issue of seeking to win members from other churches has ecclesiological and missiologically significant consequences, which require further exploration.

(63) Unethical methods of evangelization must be sharply distinguished from the legitimate act of persuasively presenting the Gospel. If a Christian, after hearing a responsible presentation of the Gospel, freely chooses to join a different Christian community, it should not automatically be concluded that such a transfer is the result of proselytism (P 93, 94).

(64) Catholic-Evangelical relations have been troubled by the practice of seeking to evangelize people who are already members of a church, which causes misunderstanding and resentment, especially when Evangelicals seek to 'convert' baptized Catholics away from the Roman Catholic Church. This is more than a verbal conflict about different uses of terms like con-

version, Christian, and church. Evangelicals speak of 'nominal Christianity,' referring to those who are Christians in name, but only marginally Christian in reality, even if they have been baptized. Nominal Christians are contrasted with converted believers, who can testify to a living union with Christ, whose confession is biblical and whose faith is active in love. This is a sharp distinction common among Evangelicals, who see nominal Christians as needing to be won to a personal relation with the Lord and Saviour. Evangelicals seek to evangelize nominal members of their own churches, as well as of others; they see this activity as an authentic concern for the Gospel, and not as a reprehensible kind of 'sheep-stealing' (E sec. iii). Catholics also speak of 'evangelizing' such people, although they refer to them as 'lapsed' or 'inactive' rather than as 'nominal,' and still regard them as 'Christian' since they are baptized believers. They are understandably offended whenever Evangelicals appear to regard all Roman Catholics as nominal Christians, or whenever they base their evangelism on a distorted view of Catholic teaching and practice.

(65) We agree that a distinction must be made between one's estimate of the doctrines and practices of a church and the judgment that bears on an individual's spiritual condition, e.g. his or her relationship to Christ and to the church.

(66) As to an individual's spiritual or religious condition, whether a person is nominal, lapsed, inactive, or fallen away, a negative judgment is suspect of being intrusive unless the person to be evangelized is the source of that

information. The spiritual condition of a person is always a mystery. Listening should be first, together with a benevolent presumption of charity, and in all cases we may share our perception and experience of the Good News only in a totally respectful attitude towards those we seek to evangelize. This attitude should also be the case apart from evangelization in all attempts at persuading brothers and sisters in what we believe to be true.

(67) Evangelicals and Catholics are challenged to repent of the practice of misrepresenting each other, either because of laziness in study, or unwillingness to listen, prejudice, or unethical judgments (E i). We repent of the culpable ignorance that neglects readily accessible knowledge of the other's tradition (P 93). We are keenly aware of the command: 'Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbour' (Ex. 20:16).

(68) We repent of those forms of evangelization prompted by competition and personal prestige, and of efforts to make unjust or uncharitable reference to the beliefs or practices of other religious communities in order to win adherents (E I, p. 91, J 19). We repent of the use of similar means for retaining adherents. We deplore competitive forms of evangelism that habitually pit ourselves against other Christians (P 93) (cf. *DH* 4, 12; John Paul II, *Tertio millennio adveniente* 35). All forms of evangelization should witness to the glory of God.

(69) We repent of unworthy forms of evangelization which aim at pressuring people to change their church affiliation in ways that dishonour the Gospel, and by methods which compromise rather than enhance the freedom of the

believer and the truth of the Gospel (B 31).

(70) Thus agreeing, we commit ourselves to seeking a 'newness of attitudes' in our understanding of each other's intentions (cf. Eph. 4:23, *UR* 7).

## 2. Conversion: To What Are We Turning?

### a. Growing in *Koinonia*

(71) The bonds of *koinonia*, which separated Christians already share, imply further responsibilities toward one another. Each must be concerned about the welfare and the integrity of the other. The bonds of *koinonia* imply that Christians in established churches protect the civil rights of the other Christians to free speech, press and assembly. At the same time, the bonds of *koinonia* imply that the other Christians respect the rights, integrity and history of Christians in established churches. Tensions can be reduced if Christians engaged in mission communicate with one another and seek to witness together as far as possible, rather than compete with one another.

(72) Central to our understanding of religious conversion is our belief and experience that 'the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us' (Rom. 5:5). 'Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child.' (1 Jn. 5:1). Our failures in loving one another are the scandal that calls into question whether we have allowed this love to come into our hearts without obstruction. Since Evangelicals believe their church to be catholic, and Catholics

believe their church to be evangelical, it would seem that our future task is to recognize better the aspects that each of us emphasizes in the others' view as well.

(73) Evangelicals agree with Catholics, that the goal of evangelization is *koinonia* with the triune God and one another. One enters into this *koinonia* through conversion to Christ by the Spirit within the proclaiming, caring community of faith which witnesses to the Reign of God. Catholics agree with Evangelicals, that all Christians of whatever communion can have a living personal relationship with Jesus as Lord and Saviour. On the basis of our real but imperfect communion we ask God to give us the grace to recommit ourselves to having a living personal relationship with Jesus as Lord and Saviour and deepening our relationship to one another.

### b. Religious Liberty

(74) We grow in *koinonia* when we support one another and acknowledge one another's freedom. Religious freedom is not only a civil right but one of the principles, together with that of mutual respect, that guide relationships among members of the Body of Christ and, indeed, with the entire human family (P 99). We have been called to work together to promote freedom of conscience for all persons, and to defend civil guarantees for freedom of assembly, speech and press. Recognizing that we have often failed to respect these liberties in the past, Catholics and Evangelicals affirm the right of all persons to pursue that truth and to witness to that truth (J 15, P 104). We affirm the right of persons freely to

adopt or change their religious community without duress. We deplore every attempt to impose beliefs or to manipulate others in the name of religion (J 15, P 102). Evangelicals can concur with the position of the Second Vatican Council on religious freedom, namely that all 'are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs. Nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits' (*DH 2*; cf. B 40).

(75) In the person of Pope John Paul II the Catholic Church has recognized and apologized for the violations of justice and charity for which its members have been responsible in the course of history.<sup>13</sup> Today it seeks to protect the religious liberty of all persons and their communities. At the same time, it is committed to spreading the message of the Gospel to all without proselytism or reliance on the state.

(76) While religious liberty has been a rallying point for Evangelicals from the earliest period, they have been called from their sectarianism to greater mutual respect and increased co-operation in mission by the catholic spirit of John Wesley, the revivals of the nineteenth century, and the challenges of world mission. Interdenominational,

---

<sup>13</sup> Cf. John Paul II, 'Universal Prayer for Forgiveness, e) Confession of sins committed in actions against love, peace, the rights of peoples and respect for cultures and religions', Vatican City, March 12, 2000.

world-wide fellowship and co-operation in mission have been served by the Evangelical Alliance. The Alliance has always been concerned about religious liberty, indeed, as early as 1872 lobbying on behalf of oppressed Catholics in Japan.<sup>14</sup> According to the *Manila Manifesto* (1989):

Christians earnestly desire freedom of religion for all people, not just freedom for Christianity. In predominantly Christian countries, Christians are at the forefront of those who demand freedom for religious minorities. In predominantly non-Christian countries, therefore, Christians are asking for themselves no more than they demand for others in similar circumstances. The freedom to 'profess, practice and propagate' religion, as defined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, could and should surely be a reciprocally granted right (*Manila* 12.1).

We greatly regret any unworthy witness of which followers of Jesus may have been guilty (*Manila* 12.2).

(77) Religious freedom is a right which flows from the very dignity of the person as known through the revealed Word of God: it is grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (P 98). Civil authorities have an obligation to respect and to protect this right (cf. *DH* 2). For Catholics this view was formally adopted at Vatican II in the *Dec-*

*laration on Religious Freedom*. Evangelicals at *Lausanne* 1974, *Manila* 1989 and *Amsterdam* 2000 affirmed a similar position.

(78) Evangelicals and Roman Catholics differ somewhat in the theological and anthropological rationale for this position. Catholic social thought bases rights' theory on natural law. It sees human rights as legitimate moral claims that are God-given; free moral agents have a corresponding responsibility to act in the light of those claims. Revelation is seen to complement this understanding of rights. In evangelical teaching, primacy belongs to the divine right over conscience, the Lord's immediate claim on each individual; human rights, then, are viewed not only in creational light but also against the backdrop of the human fall into sin. The history of sin makes the mandate for rights all the more important. God continues to pursue fallen creatures in the unfolding history of grace. Catholics and Evangelicals agree that human rights should be interpreted and exercised within the framework of Scripture teaching and of rigorous moral reasoning. Due regard must be had for the needs of others, for duties towards other parties, and for the common good (P 102, *DH* 7). Human rights language, also, must guard against being turned into narcissism, self-assertiveness and ideology.

### 3. Turning to One Another: The Challenge of Common Witness

(79) What remains as a hope and a challenge is the prospect of our common witness. We see the communities of faith, to which we belong, as set

---

<sup>14</sup> Cf. I. Randall and D. Hilborn, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance*, (Paternoster: Carlisle, 2001), p. 98.

apart and anointed for mission. We are concerned about the growing secularization of the world and efforts to marginalize Christian values. It is urgent that our evangelization be ever more effective. Is it not also urgent that Christians witness together? In this sense the Second Vatican Council called Catholics to cooperate with other Christians in this way:

To the extent that their beliefs are common, they can make before the nations a common profession of faith in God and in Jesus Christ. They can collaborate in social and in technical projects as well as in cultural and religious ones. Let them work together especially for the sake of Christ, their common Lord. Let His Name be the bond that unites them! (*AG* 15).

The core of evangelization is the apostolic faith that is found in the word of God, the creeds, and is reflected in biblical interpretations and the doctrinal consensus of the patristic age. The possibility of Evangelicals and Catholics giving common witness lies in the fact that despite their disagreements, they share much of the Christian faith. We rejoice, for example, that we can confess together the Apostles' Creed as a summary of biblical faith.

(80) While acknowledging the divergences, which remain between us, we are discerning a convergence between our two communions regarding the need and possibilities of common witness:

The Amsterdam Declaration 2000 urged Evangelicals:

to pray and work for unity in truth among all true believers in Jesus and to co-operate as fully as possi-

ble in evangelism with other brothers and sisters in Christ so that the whole church may take the whole Gospel to the whole world (*Amsterdam* 14).

And Pope John Paul II asks,

How indeed can we proclaim the Gospel of reconciliation without at the same time being committed to working for reconciliation between Christians? (*IUS* 98).

Therefore, to the extent conscience and the clear recognition of agreement and disagreement allows, we commit ourselves to common witness.

(81) We conclude this report by joining together in a spirit of humility, putting our work, with whatever strengths and limitations it may have, in the hands of God. Our hope is that these efforts will be for the praise and glory of Jesus Christ.

'Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen' (Eph. 3:20-21).

## ABBREVIATIONS

### Catholic Documents

- AG*: Vatican II\*, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, *Ad gentes*  
*CD*: Vatican II, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops, *Christus Dominus*  
*DH*: Vatican II, Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*

- LG: Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*
- SC: Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*
- UR: Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*
- EN: Paul VI, Apostolic Letter 'On the Evangelization in the Modern World' *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), *Vatican Council II, More Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery, O.P., ed. (Dublin, 1982), pp. 711-761
- RM: John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate, Redemptoris Missio* (1990), (Vatican City, 1990)
- UUS: John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *On Commitment to Ecumenism* (1995), *Ut unum sint*, (Vatican City, 1995)
- \*Cf. *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbot ed. (New York, 1966)

### Evangelical Documents

- Amsterdam: 'The Amsterdam Declaration: A Charter for Evangelism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' (2000), *The Mission of An Evangelist* (Minneapolis, 2001), pp. 449-459
- Lausanne: 'Lausanne Covenant', 1974, *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 1: Basic Statements 1974-1991*, James A. Scherer and Stephen Bevans, eds. (Maryknoll, 1992), pp. 253-259
- Manila: 'Manila Manifesto', 1989, *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 1: Basic Statements 1974-1991*, James A. Scherer and Stephen Bevans, eds. (Maryknoll, 1992), pp. 292-305

### Dialogue Documents

- B: *Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World: A Report on the Baptist-Roman Catholic International Conversations 1984-1988*, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Information Service [IS] 72 (1990/I), pp. 5-14
- E: *The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission 1977-1984, A Report*, Basil Meeking and John Stott, eds. (Grand Rapids, 1986); see also IS 60 (1986/I-II), pp. 71-97
- J: Joint Working Group Between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, 'The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness', *The Seventh Report*, Appendix C, (Geneva, 1998), pp. 43-52; see also IS 91 (1996/I-II), pp. 77-83
- P: *Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness, The Report from the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue (1990-1997) Between the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders*, IS 97 (1998/I-II), pp. 38-56; see also *Pneuma* 21:1(1999), pp. 11-51

## APPENDIX 1

### EVOLUTION OF THIS INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

#### 1. Historical Background

Increasing contacts between Evangelicals and Catholics during the 1970s and 1980s provide a background for the international consultations between the World Evangelical Fellowship and the Catholic Church that have taken place since 1993.

Among these contacts, an international dialogue on mission between some Evangelicals and Roman Catholics took place between 1978 and 1984. On the Catholic side it was sponsored by the Vatican's Secretariat (after 1988, Pontifical Council) for Promoting Christian Unity. Evangelical participants included some prominent leaders such as John Stott, but the participants came on their own authority, without officially representing any evangelical body. This dialogue led to an important report, published in 1985, the first in which Evangelicals and Catholics discussed together such themes as salvation, evangelization, religious liberty, and proselytism.

Another important international arena in which Evangelical and Catholic leaders have encountered one another has been the annual meetings of the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions (CWC). This Conference, existing for more than forty years, includes the general secretaries or their equivalent, from a broad range of CWCs. The Interna-

tional Director of the World Evangelical Fellowship and the Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity have been among the participants in this informal annual meeting.

The need for more direct relations was evident from a specific event which also led to the present WEF-Catholic conversations. This took place when two representatives of the Catholic Church, one of them from the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, were invited as observers and brought greetings to the 1980 General Assembly of WEF held in Hoddesdon, England. Their presence led to a heated debate, after which 'the Italian Evangelical Alliance withdrew its membership and the Spanish Evangelical Alliance placed its participation in abeyance'. The WEF Theological Commission responded by creating a seventeen-member Ecumenical Issues Task Force. It developed a statement that was published as *Roman Catholicism: A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective* (ed. Paul G. Schrottenboer, Grand Rapids: Baker 1988) in which the details just mentioned are found (p. 9).

The CWC meeting in Jerusalem in October 1988 provided an occasion for a private conversation on the book between, on the one hand, Rev David Howard, International Director of WEF, and Dr. Paul Schrottenboer, General Secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod and Chairman of the WEF Task Force, with, on the other hand, Rev. Pierre Duprey, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Msgr. John Radano of the same Pontifical Council. They decided to hold a short meeting to discuss issues raised in the book. This

meeting took place on the occasion of the CWC meeting in October 1990 in Budapest, Hungary. Two persons from each side — Dr. Paul Schrotenboer and Dr. George Vandervelde, for WEF, and Msgr. Kevin McDonald and Msgr. John Radano, for the PCPCU — met for two full days to discuss the book. This discussion helped to pinpoint some of the differences between the two communions, but it was clear that more time was required to explore these issues. It was therefore proposed that a well prepared and longer consultation be arranged for a later date. Bishop Pierre Duprey invited the consultation to meet in Venice.

## 2. Brief Overview of the Meetings

Starting with the one held in Venice in October 1993, several international meetings have taken place. Their general aim has been to foster greater mutual understanding and better relations.

An initial assessment from the 1990 meeting ascertained that the important topics to discuss in Venice were Scripture, tradition (including the development of doctrine), and the nature of the church as communion. It became clear that the doctrine of justification, too would have to be treated. Papers were prepared by Rev. Avery Dulles, S.J. ('Revelation as the Basis for Scripture and Tradition') with a response by Dr. Henri Blocher, and by Dr. George Vandervelde ('Justification between Scripture and Tradition'). The exploratory nature and delicacy of this encounter was reflected in the fact that no common statement or communique was published. Eventually the papers were

published in 1997 in the *Evangelical Review of Theology*. The meeting confirmed the importance of the issues taken up for discussion but lifted up especially two issues that tend to divide Evangelicals and Catholics. Besides the nature of the church as communion, the other issue was the nature and practice of mission and evangelism.

These topics were taken up at the next consultation, held in October 1997 at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem. Papers were given by Rev. Avery Dulles, S.J. ('The Church as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic'), Dr. George Vandervelde ('Ecclesiology in the Breach: Evangelical Soundings'), Rev. Thomas Stransky, C.S.P. ('The Mission of the Church'), and Dr. Samuel Escobar ('Missionary Dynamism in Search of Missiological Discernment'). Co-secretaries for this meeting were Dr. Paul Schrotenboer and Rev. Timothy Galligan.

Increasing mutual confidence between the two partners was reflected in the fact that for the first time a communique about this meeting was published. The papers were published both in the *Evangelical Review of Theology* and in *One in Christ*, a Roman Catholic journal. Some months after this meeting we received the sad news of the death of Dr. Paul Schrotenboer. His deep commitment to the process was reflected in the fact that as early as the Venice meeting, he participated despite the discomfort caused by the illness that was increasingly testing his strength. In 1997 he co-chaired the Tantur meeting, despite having had his leg amputated some months earlier. We give thanks to God for the firm witness of Dr. Schrotenboer to overcome

ing misunderstanding and hostilities between Evangelicals and Catholics, which have persisted for so long.

The third meeting was held at Williams Bay, Wisconsin, November 1999, at the invitation of WEF. By this time it was agreed to proceed with these meetings on a regular basis. The Williams Bay session focused on the theme of the church as communion. Rev. Avery Dulles developed this theme on the Catholic side and Dr. Henry Blocher on the Evangelical side. Rev. Thomas Stransky, C.S.P. presented a paper highlighting aspects of several reports dealing with 'Religious Freedom, Common Witness, and Proselytism.' Daniel M. Carroll Rodas presented a paper on the same issues as they affect Roman Catholic—Evangelical relations in Latin America. Dr. George Vandervelde and Msgr. Timothy Galligan served the meeting as co-secretaries.

A new development in the conversations was marked by the request for the preparation of two collaboratively developed papers. Rev. Avery Dulles, S.J. and Prof. Henri Blocher were requested to prepare a unified summary on the convergences and differences on the church as *koinonia*. Dr. Thomas Oden, Rev. Thomas Stransky, C.S.P. and Rev. John Haughey, S.J. were asked to prepare a paper on the themes of religious freedom, common witness, and proselytism.

Besides the discussion of the papers, several important events took place during this Williams Bay meeting which helped to deepen our mutual understanding. The dialogue members together visited important Evangelical schools, including Wheaton College and Trinity Evangelical Divinity

School. The participants met and had informal discussions with some of the faculty of both institutions. At Wheaton, they visited the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals and had conversations with the director, and also visited the Billy Graham Museum, with its display of the history of Evangelicalism in the USA. At Trinity, they were welcomed at a reception by the Academic Dean, Dr. Bingham Hunter and addressed by Dr. Kenneth Kantzer, a former president, after which they had the opportunity for informal discussions with the faculty. The members of the consultation also visited the Seminary of the Archdiocese of Chicago at Mundelein, where Cardinal Francis George, Archbishop of Chicago hosted a dinner. Here the consultation team also met the local Catholic-Evangelical 'Common Root' project. These various meetings and events gave the dialogue participants deeper insights into the life of their partner, and showed a broader view of Evangelical—Catholic contacts, all of which encouraged the dialogue in its important work.

Indicative of the growth of fellowship was the fact that WEF accepted the invitation of Pope John Paul II, conveyed by the PCPCU, and extended also to many other churches and Christian World Communions, to send a representative to the 'Ecumenical Commemoration of Witnesses to the Faith in the Twentieth Century,' held at the Colosseum in Rome on May 7, 2000, one of the Ecumenical events of the Jubilee Year 2000. Dr. George Vandervelde and Rev. Johan Candelin participated in this event on behalf of WEF.

The fourth meeting took place at

Mundelein, Illinois, Feb. 18-24, 2001. The evolution of this dialogue was reflected in the fact that for the first time it had before it an initial draft of a common text, namely, on the theme of *koinonia*, developed by Avery Dulles in cooperation with Henry Blocher (Rev. Dulles, S.J. was unable to attend this meeting because he was in Rome for his investiture as Cardinal by Pope John Paul II). Another text, prepared by Dr. Thomas Oden, gathered representative aspects from previous dialogue documents on the themes of religious liberty and proselytism. This and a number of brief theses reflecting on this material, prepared by Rev. John Haughey, S.J. were discussed as well.

A Fifth Meeting took place in Swanwick, England, February 17-26, 2002. Significant changes had taken place in both sponsoring bodies in the time between the previous meeting and this. WEF's name was changed to *World Evangelical Alliance* (WEA), and it was in process of seeking new leadership. At the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, changes in its leadership took place and a new president and secretary took office. Also, when Msgr. Timothy Galligan, Co-Secretary of this Consultation, completed his term of service to the PCPUC in 2001,

Rev. Juan Usma Gómez was appointed to that responsibility on the Catholic side. Three new participants on the Evangelical side attended for the first time: Rev. Dr. Rolf Hille, Chairman of the *Theological Commission of WEA*, Rev. Dr. David Hilborn, Theological Advisor to the *Evangelical Alliance UK*, and Rev. Carlos Rodríguez Mansur, *Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana* in Brazil. While preparations for this meeting were slowed down because of these changes in both administrations, the Consultation had before it at Swanwick an integrated draft of a proposed common report; and aimed at bringing it to a completed form. The text achieved at the end of the week included two main parts. Part I focused on convergences between Catholics and Evangelicals on *Koinonia*; and Part II on the relationship of *koinonia* to evangelization.

It was agreed that the completed report would be presented to the sponsoring bodies requesting approval for its publication as a study text. The completion of this text brought a phase of conversations to a close. As they completed their work, the participants expressed the hope that this consultation between the World Evangelical Alliance and the Catholic Church would continue.

### **The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology**

Editor: Colin Brown

A four volume set offering concise discussions of all the major theological terms in the New Testament against the background of classical and koine Greek, the Old Testament, Rabbinical thought and different usages in the New Testament.

0-85364-432-2 / 4 Volumes, total 3506pp / hb / 240x165mm / £119.99

**Paternoster, 9 Holdom Avenue, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK1 1QR, UK9**

# Toward a Theology of HIV/AIDS

Phillip Marshall

**KEYWORDS:** *Africa, epidemic, compassion, sexuality, suffering, stigma, healing, hope, behaviour.*

## The Global Picture

In the twenty years since the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) was first isolated, the medical syndrome caused by HIV has resulted worldwide in the deaths of over twenty million people and the orphaning of at least fourteen million children, with the consequent disintegration of families, communities and whole societies. Every day fourteen thousand new HIV infections occur, the vast majority in the two-thirds world, with half of these in adolescents and young adults. Every day eight thousand people die from AIDS causes.<sup>1</sup>

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is now a household word for most of us. At least two-thirds of those infected and affected are in sub-Saharan Africa. Life expectancy has significantly declined in such countries as Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire. 'In Botswana, where about one in three adults is already HIV infected—the highest prevalence in the world—it is estimated that two-thirds of 15 year old boys will die prematurely of AIDS.'<sup>2</sup>

Says South African statesman Nelson Mandela bluntly: 'AIDS is a war against humanity'.<sup>3</sup> Yet this is a war largely silent and invisible. Conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, along with the 'war on terror', consume the world's

---

<sup>1</sup> The best source for current information on HIV/AIDS is the UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS) 'Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic, published in every even year and available online at <[www.unaids.org/html/pub/global-reports/bangkok/unaidsglobalreport2004\\_en\\_html.htm](http://www.unaids.org/html/pub/global-reports/bangkok/unaidsglobalreport2004_en_html.htm)>.

---

<sup>2</sup> Tony Barnett and Alan Whiteside, *AIDS in the Twenty-First Century: Disease and globalization* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Nelson Mandela, 'Care, Support and Destigmatization' in *The aWAKE Project: Uniting against the African AIDS Crisis*, ed. Jenny Eaton and Kate Etue (Nashville: W. Publishing, 2002), p.19.

---

**Phillip Marshall** has worked in medicine (Australia), theological education and mission leadership (Peru, with SIM International), and HIV/AIDS consultancy (Africa, also with SIM International). Currently he teaches missions and Old Testament at Morling College, Sydney Australia. He has a DMin from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and nurtures an interest in the transformational challenge of Christian education. An earlier version of this paper was presented by the author and discussed at a conference on 'Theological Education in Context: Addressing the AIDS Reality' at Pietermaritzburg, South Africa in November 2003 and sponsored by ACTEA Southern Africa Region and the Evangelical Seminary of Southern Africa. The modified text of this document was incorporated by the author into his DMin major project with Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. (see note 9 below) It has been edited slightly for publication here.

attention and resources, allowing HIV to rapidly advance, particularly in Africa, Central America, parts of Asia, and Eastern Europe. 'The global HIV epidemic is the greatest threat to health, family life and economic survival that the world has ever known.'<sup>4</sup>

From a biomedical perspective the virus spreads when someone comes into contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person, such as occurs with intercourse, breast milk, blood transfusions, and contaminated needles and syringes. It causes a progressive breakdown of the body's immune system, allowing other diseases such as tuberculosis to attack the body until death results. When the body is showing the signs of this weakened immune state, people are said to be suffering from AIDS.

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus is not highly contagious; in theory the AIDS epidemic could be stopped by good public health practices and universal access to antiretroviral medicines (ARVs), hence the vocal calls internationally for more funding, cheaper ARVs, and greater political will. However, we are dealing with a very clever enemy here, one that ruthlessly exploits human weakness. Commonly held beliefs around the world such as the autonomy of the individual, our rights to sexual 'freedom' without consequences, male dominance, behaviour change through increased knowledge, condoms as the answer to HIV spread, that all who are

HIV positive are 'sinners', the impossibility of sexual abstinence among youth, the curing of AIDS through 'sleeping with a virgin', limited funding as the major obstacle, and a vaccine and/or universal access to ARVs as our only hope, all allow HIV to continue advancing. To put matters bluntly, in this 'war on HIV', humanity is losing. Of particular concern is the growth of HIV in China and India, by virtue of their enormous populations.

The rapid spread of HIV/AIDS around the world and its threat to humanity is complex and can be understood only from a multidisciplinary perspective. The causes and implications of this global epidemic are medical, sociological, political, economic, educational and spiritual. Useful resources to explain the complex interaction of the virus with humanity are readily available.<sup>5</sup> AIDS has been

---

4 Andrew Tomkins, *Present and Future Challenges: The scale, impact and need for new approaches in the global HIV epidemic*, available online at <[www.viva.org/tellme/events/cuttingedge/resources/2002/aids.htm](http://www.viva.org/tellme/events/cuttingedge/resources/2002/aids.htm)>, 2002.

---

5 Useful resources include Patrick Dixon, *The Truth About AIDS*, and *AIDS and You*, 3rd ed. (both ACET International Alliance/Kingsway, 2002—full texts also available online at [www.globalchange.com/ttaa/contents.htm](http://www.globalchange.com/ttaa/contents.htm)); C. Jean Garland, *AIDS is Real and It's in Our Church*, 2nd ed. (Bukuru, Nigeria: Africa Christian Textbooks, 2004—also available electronically from <[acts@hisen.org](mailto:acts@hisen.org)>); Barnett and Whiteside, *AIDS in the Twenty-First Century* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); W. Meredith Long, *Health, Healing and God's Kingdom: New pathways to Christian health ministry in Africa* (Irvine, CA: Regnum, 2000); Edward C. Green, *Rethinking AIDS Prevention: Learning from successes in developing countries* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003); Ezekiel Kalipeni, Susan Craddock, Joseph R. Oppong and Jayati Ghosh, *HIV and AIDS in Africa: Beyond epidemiology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Scientific, 2004).

called 'a disease of broken relationships' because it spreads when God's plan for humanity is flouted—in sexual immorality, in stigma and discrimination against those infected and affected, in the oppression of the weak in society, in lack of access to knowledge and resources, and in humanity's stubborn refusal to acknowledge God. Sadly God's people have often been part of the problem rather than working with God to bring about compassionate care and transformation.

In the non-Western world, the spread of HIV is largely a heterosexual issue. The majority of HIV-positive women are infected by their husbands. People in dangerous occupations and jobs where husbands and wives are separated tend to be especially at risk of HIV infection. These include military and police, miners, long distance truck drivers, teachers, seasonal workers and health workers. Commercial sex workers are at high risk.

Despite the global implications of HIV/AIDS, the West, including the Western church, has directed minimal attention to this major tragedy in the two-thirds world. HIV/AIDS is simply a low priority on the political and ecclesiastical agenda. Ironically, in many of the countries where HIV is currently decimating the population, the problem is likewise ignored by government, community and church. This can be attributed to such factors as a strong sense of shame, weak social infrastructures, a reticence to discuss the issues of sex, suffering and death, and a perception that 'solutions' offered by outside governments and organizations such as the UN are being imposed.

Catherine Campbell writes of a min-

ing community in South Africa in such a state of denial:

At one level it seems bizarre that a community with such high levels of youth HIV is locked into such a conspiracy of silence around the risks to young people. Young people and their parents persistently cling to attitudes and norms that will lead to high levels of suffering and death. In many ways this is a community trapped in high levels of passivity, denial and fatalism about a problem that is likely to kill off half its young people.<sup>6</sup>

Dr Andrew Tomkins of the Institute of Child Health, University College, London, writes with particular reference to sub-Saharan Africa:

HIV has a major impact on economic production, agriculture, education, parenting and social development. This results in a dramatic shortening of adult life span, throwing a burden on the elderly who are themselves frail and in need of care. The repeated illness of economically important adults reduces family income and household food security. The viability of whole industries is threatened. Major changes in the type and quality of food production occur, as adults are too weak to cultivate certain crops. Health services are compromised as increasing numbers of staff are infected—leading

---

6 Catherine Campbell, *Letting Them Die: Why HIV/AIDS Intervention Programmes Fail* (African Issues series, International African Institute) (Oxford: James Currey, 2003), p. 131.

to absence from work. There are considerable demands on the time of pastors and members to care for the dying and dead as well as to respond to great expectations for caring for families affected by HIV/AIDS.<sup>7</sup>

In many communities, volunteers with minimal or no training and few resources are caring for the infected and affected, as well as talking about prevention. Their story is told elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> An issue common to so much of our world is the enormity of the AIDS epidemic and the scarcity and weariness of caregivers. The multiplied millions of affected adults and children easily overwhelm the grassroots human response and engender a 'compassion fatigue' among those who are doing something. This is a unique opportunity for the global church of Jesus Christ to unite to 'bind up the broken hearted'.

In this time of crisis, theological reflection should provide us with a light to our path. We need to shift our

focus from the stark human need to the God who commissions us. Our reflection should provide us with a theology that can help the pregnant woman in Nigeria who goes for antenatal testing and learns that she is HIV-positive, the pastor in Ethiopia preaching at yet another funeral for a young person who has apparently died of tuberculosis or the 'wasting disease', and the grandmother in Malawi watching her children die and knowing that she alone is the safety net protecting her grandchildren from a future on the streets.

The God concerned for the widow and the orphan (Deut. 10:18; Jas. 1:27), who tells us to 'hold back those staggering to slaughter' (Prov. 24:11), calls us to ask the question, 'When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?' (Ps. 11:3). In these circumstances, theological reflection is not a luxury for the uninvolved but a call for the righteous to respond (Mt. 25:40).

In November 2003, evangelical theologians from across Africa and beyond met in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, to examine the theme: 'Theological Education in Context: Addressing the AIDS Reality'.<sup>9</sup> One of the

---

<sup>7</sup> Tomkins, *Present and Future Challenges*.

<sup>8</sup> See for example Phyllis Kilbourn (ed), *Children Affected by HIV/AIDS: Compassionate care* (Monrovia: MARC, 2002); Jenny Eaton and Kate Etue (eds), *The aWAKE Project: Uniting against the African AIDS Crisis* (Nashville: W. Publishing, 2002); Jeremy Liebowitz, *The Impact of Faith-based Organizations on HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation in Africa*, available online at <[www.und.ac.za/und/heard/publications/FBOs%20paper\\_Dec02.pdf](http://www.und.ac.za/und/heard/publications/FBOs%20paper_Dec02.pdf)>, 2002; Gideon Byamugisha, Lucy Y. Steinitz, Glen Williams, and Phumzile Zondi, *Journeys of Faith: Church-based responses to HIV and AIDS in three southern African countries* (Strategies for Hope series, No 16) (UK: ActionAid, 2002).

---

<sup>9</sup> The conference was co-sponsored by the ACTEA Southern Africa Region and the Evangelical Seminary of Southern Africa. Following the conference, the modified text of this document was incorporated into the dissertation by Phillip Marshall, *Breaking the Silence: The development and implementation by SIM International of a strategy to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa*, (unpublished D.Min. major project) (Deerfield, IL: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2004). Copies available on CD from <[pdmarshall@primus.com.au](mailto:pdmarshall@primus.com.au)>.

papers discussed was entitled: 'Toward a Theology of HIV/AIDS'. The text of this paper as modified by the various contributions of conference participants appears below. It needs to be emphasized that this is a working document with the purpose of acting as a catalyst for deeper discussion by those around the world who see the present and future affects and implications of HIV/AIDS.

### 1. God

The God who responds to HIV/AIDS is seen supremely in Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate Word of God and the Lord of creation and history, who trod the dusty roads of Palestine. He is the One who responds to the plea of a leper, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.' 'Filled with compassion', Jesus reached out his hand and touched this man who is cut off from God and his people, and says, 'I am willing, be clean!' He is the One who breaks into Zacchaeus' life with transforming love. He is the One who says to a woman caught in adultery, 'Neither do I condemn you, go and leave your life of sin', and to a sinful woman, 'Your sins are forgiven.... You faith has saved you; go in peace' (Mk. 1:40-42; Lk. 7:48-50, 19:1-10; Jn. 1:1, 14, 8:1-11; Philp. 2:9-11).

The God who responds to HIV/AIDS is the One who welcomes little children and restores those who have disowned him. He touches the sick, the lame, the blind, and the hurting. He has compassion on the hungry and the worried, the lost and wandering, the demonized, and the alienated, knowing that we are all like sheep without a shepherd. This is who God is (Mt. 4:23-25, 9:35-36,

11:5; Mk. 1:29-34; Lk. 18:15-17; Jn. 10:10, 21:15-19).

The God who responds to HIV/AIDS is the One who weeps at the grave of Lazarus, where illness, death, and emptiness have come to a family. He is the One who laments over Jerusalem with all its ritual and religious fervour, his loving heart broken by those who have forsaken his ways, spurned his Word, and rejected him. He is the One who grieves over his people, and who yearns to gather them to himself in reconciling mercy. He is the One who says, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.... If it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.' This is who God is (Mt. 21:12-13, 23:37, 26:38-39; Jn. 11:35).

Who is God? God is the creator and sustainer of all things, who created men and women in his own image. He is the One who gave the gift of joyful intimate love between a man and a woman. God is the One who creates a hope for his people—a hope that gives purpose and meaning in this life, and a hope that carries assurance of joy and renewal in the life to come. He gives the Holy Spirit to his people to live lives that are honouring to him. This is who God is (Gen. 1:27, 31, 2:20-25; Rom. 8:24-25; Eph. 5:25-33; Tit. 2:11-14; Heb. 1:2-3).

This God is none other than Jesus Christ. It is not simply that Jesus reveals God; it is that Jesus is God. Jesus, who fled to Africa as a child refugee, who lived and ministered in an occupied country at the crossroads of Asia, Africa, and Europe, and who died the shameful death of a criminal on the cross of a foreign power, is the One whom we worship, follow, and trust.

By the example of his compassionate response to the many who came to him for help and healing, Jesus demonstrates his willingness today to receive and restore those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, and to incorporate these sons and daughters in his kingdom both now and for eternity (Col. 1:19-20, 2:9; Heb. 1:3).

## 2. Humanity

As creatures united by a common humanity, we derive our identity and significance as societies, communities, families, and individuals from our Creator (Gen. 1:26-27, Acts 17:28-29; Eph. 3:15). God has made us to dwell in communion with him and with one another for all eternity (Jn. 14:2, 3; Rom. 12:10, 16; 1 Cor. 15:48-54; 1 Jn. 4:11-12). We are to reflect his glory and nature in lives that are dependent upon him, lived according to his ways in the strength that he provides (Deut. 4:5-8; Mt. 5:13-16, 6:31-34; 1 Pet. 2:9-12). The fear (awe) of God, not of the spirits, is the beginning of wisdom (Ps. 111:9-10; Prov. 1:7).

God's word, contained in the Old and New Testaments, is our starting point and final authority for understanding the universe and our role in it as stewards, accountable to him for how we live (Ps. 119:97-104; Mt. 25:14-30; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Through it we learn that our existence in this world is valuable, significant, and meaningful, and that our decisions and actions here have both present and eternal consequences (Deut. 32:46-47; Mt. 12:35-37, 25:1-13; Heb. 12:1-3). We are to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love our neighbour as ourselves (Mk. 12:30-

31). Jesus' Parable of the Good Samaritan, in response to the question, 'Who is my neighbour?' reinforces the duty of care we have to those in need, regardless of race or other distinctives (Is. 1:16-17; Mt. 25:37-40, 44-46; Lk. 10:29-37; Jas. 1:27).

## Focus on HIV/AIDS

At the community level HIV exploits weakness and sin in human behaviour, relationships, and cultures, destroying the core of humanity with its hope of future generations. At the individual level, the virus causing AIDS infects our bodies, attacking the very immune system designed by God to protect us. The numbers of orphans and HIV positive people increase daily, despite large scale responses to address the problem, involving billions of dollars, conferences, declarations, and massive human effort.

Christians can point to God's revealed norms for human behaviour—strong communities, faithful marriages, loving families, sexual integrity—as a way to reverse the increase of HIV in our world. However, we must avoid simplistic approaches to complex human nature, especially in the areas of human behaviour which lead to HIV infection, stigmatization, and care of those infected and affected. Christians have a unique opportunity in our time to be salt and light in a world ravaged by HIV/AIDS, as we live according to God's standards and follow in the footsteps of the true Good Samaritan.

## 3. Evil, Sin, and Judgement

Because of the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in choosing to go

against God, we are all sinners by nature, sharing in the fallenness of God's present creation and the ongoing rebellion of humanity against God (Gen. 3:1-8; Mt. 24:4-14; Rom. 1:18-2:1, 5:12; 2 Tim. 3:1-5). God hates evil and as judge will punish all who are disobedient to his revealed glory and commandments and who bring dishonour to his name (Acts 17:31; Rom. 1:18; Heb. 10:26-27; 1 Pet. 4:17).

All human beings are implicated in a cosmic battle led by Satan and his forces against God (Job 1:7-11; Lk. 22:31-32; Lk. 10:17-20; Rev. 13:5-8). Satan's power is usurped, not absolute; he is the father of lies and deception, a roaring lion seeking to devour, who encourages sinful humanity in our rebellion (Gen. 3:4-5; Jn. 8:42-45; 1 Pet. 5:8-9). Sin destroys fullness of life, relationships, and community. All human beings, with the exception of Jesus Christ, are sinners, such that we are equally under God's judgement and needing his mercy (Is. 53:6; Acts 2:38-40; Rom. 3:23-24, 6:23; Heb. 4:15-16).

Broken relationships, disease, suffering, violence, and death remind us constantly of the pervasiveness of evil in our world (Gen. 3:12; Is. 59:9-15; Jn. 11:35; 1 Jn. 5:18-19). When King Jesus ushers in his kingdom in its fullness, he will come as judge over sinners, Satan, and death itself, demonstrating his righteousness and the rightness of God's ways (1 Cor. 15:20-28; 2 Thes. 1:7-10; Heb. 9:28).

#### Focus on HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS exists as a consequence of the Fall. It is spreading because of sinful individual and communal behav-

our, cultures and societies which condone and promote such behaviour, and political, social, and economic structures which oppose God's rule over his creation. Inappropriate sexual activity, drug abuse, using unsterile syringes and other medical equipment, the transfusing of HIV contaminated blood, and the lack of anti-retroviral therapy in much of our world, result from human sin at many levels.

The ongoing unwillingness of humanity to recognize God's right to define human behaviour limits our ability to deal effectively with what is essentially a preventable disease. At the same time we must not attribute sinful behaviour to the person with HIV. The stigmatization and discrimination which accompany HIV/AIDS are sinful in that they usurp God's role of Judge. In dealing with HIV/AIDS as a crisis of public health we may sometimes choose the 'lesser evil' in recognition of the sinfulness of human beings and the fallen world in which we live, especially as we reach out to high risk groups in society.

#### 4. Redemption and Grace

In the sustaining actions of God for his world, and in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that make it possible for human beings to find fullness of life both now and for eternity, God demonstrates his grace toward rebellious humanity (Gen. 3:9; Is. 65:1-2; Lk. 15:11-24; Rom. 5:8-11, 10:15). The grace of God in Christ distinguishes Christianity from other religions and ideologies (Ex. 34:6; Lk. 10:25-37; Jn. 10:10).

God calls on us individually and collectively to recognize that our sin and

sinfulness have made us his enemies, to turn from our sin toward him, and to place our confidence in the cross of Jesus Christ (Is. 53:4-6; Eph. 2:1-8, 13; Col. 1:21-22). He gives those who so turn the assurance of forgiveness and reconciliation with him, and the Holy Spirit who enables us to follow Christ and to exchange our old nature for a new one empowered by the Spirit to live according to kingdom values (Ezek. 36:25-27; Rom. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Holiness and sexual integrity, compassion for the lost and needy, and a hatred for evil and its manifestations are marks of true conversion (Ps. 119:9-16; Gal. 5:16-26; Jas. 1:27). In the word of God we see God's blueprint for living: biblically based beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviour, including sexual behaviour (Deut. 6:5-9; Eph. 5:3-5; Tit. 2:11-14; 1 Pet. 1:13-16). In the redemption he provides, we are reconciled to him and have hope now and for eternity (Job 19:25-27; Jn. 11:23-26; 2 Thes. 2:16-17).

### Focus on HIV/AIDS

We recognize that a contributing factor to the spread of HIV/AIDS has been the unwillingness of Christians around the world to demonstrate God's grace. We confess our lack of Christlikeness and our reticence to address issues related to sexuality. We have frequently stigmatized those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS instead of demonstrating God's compassion. Like the priest and the Levite, we have chosen to pass by a fellow human being in need of God's grace; like the older brother, we have not truly known the gracious heart of the Father for the prodigal son. We have been quick to condemn, and slow

to care, to forgive, and to promote reconciliation.

At the same time millions of Christians at the grassroots are mobilizing in their communities to make a difference, mostly with few resources. Though largely unrecognized by society and governments, they are sacrificially reaching out with God's love and compassion. We sense a new day when Christians will walk in the power of the Spirit, demonstrating the kingdom of God in the context of AIDS. We believe that we will see millions in heaven who died of AIDS yet heard the gospel of grace through the words and deeds of God's people.

### 5. Sexuality

Adam and Eve were created by God as sexual beings. Sexuality is part of God's design for us. Although creation was called 'good', God's creation of humanity was incomplete until he made Eve (Gen. 1:27, 2:18-24, 5:1-2; Mt. 19:4). Human beings are characterized by sexuality (primarily a biological phenomenon) and gender (primarily a social phenomenon). 'Sexuality' is not the same as 'gender' or 'sex' (in the familiar sense of 'sexual behaviour'), although these words are often used interchangeably and with confused meanings. According to God's design, society is composed of men and women, married and single, of equal dignity and value yet distinct (Gen. 2:18-23, 3:15; 1 Cor. 11:11-12; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 5:21-33).

Gender and sexual behaviour have developed diverse expressions in different cultures. As with all other aspects of humanity, these are tainted by the Fall (Gen. 4:19, 38:1-26; 1 Thes.

4:3-7; Rev. 2:15, 20). Equality (in God's eyes) should not be confused with sameness, or headship with domination. The complementarity of the sexes has in some cultures become competitiveness, especially when male gender roles are ascribed greater value than female roles. Headship as a widely accepted view of the divine ordering of male-female relationships has commonly been corrupted into male domination over women, resulting in female subservience and abuse in diverse forms (2 Sam. 11, 13:1-17; Mt. 19:3; Lk. 7:39).

Where sexuality and gender are equated with sexual behaviour, inappropriate sexual activity distorts our sexual identity as men and women. Casual sex, fornication (sex by unmarried people), adultery, rape, pornography, prostitution, and so on are sinful expressions of our God-given sexuality (1 Cor. 6:9-10; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19). Homosexual and lesbian tendencies (orientations) should be directed to devotion to God and celibacy, not same-sex marriages; when given sexual expression they are contrary to God's will (Rom. 1:26-27).

Jesus emphasized that adultery (and fornication) are firstly sins of the mind (Mt. 5:28). To the woman 'caught in the act of adultery,' whose male partner was conspicuously absent, Jesus said, 'Has no one condemned you? Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin' (Jn. 8:3-11). He accepts the sinner while rejecting the sin.

#### Focus on HIV/AIDS

The increase of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, and AIDS in parts of our

world is evidence of humanity's misuse of God-given sexuality. The equating of sexual activity with sexuality, and the separation of sexual activity from marriage in popular thinking and mass media, have contributed to the spread of HIV. This rebellion against God's norms for behaviour permeates all societies, including wealthier nations with the structural capacity to limit the spread of HIV.

Two decades of attempts to deal with HIV by countering 'unsafe sex' and 'gender inequality' have largely failed, in part because of lack of understanding of the complexity of human sexuality and the pervasiveness of sin. The unwillingness of Christians living in the context of HIV/AIDS to even discuss sexuality, gender, and sex is one manifestation of our lack of spiritual renewal. The practice in some churches of insisting that people getting married be tested for HIV, while church leaders are not, indicates our ongoing inability to take ownership of the problem.

#### 6. Singleness and Marriage

We are sexual beings on the basis of our humanity, not our marital status. The expression of our sexuality, gender roles, and sexual behaviour must be defined in the light of God's word, taking into account the culture in which we live. Self-control in how we express ourselves sexually is necessary for all of us: male and female, single and married (Mt. 5:27; 1 Cor. 6:13-19, 7:2-9; 2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 13:4). Marriage was instituted by God in Eden and restated in the New Testament as the proper expression of sexual desire: monogamous, life-long, serving one

another 'as Christ loved the church' (Gen. 2:22-24; Mt. 5:32, 19:4-6; Eph. 5:22-33). Sexual relationships without long-term commitment are contrary to God's purposes.

Within marriage provision is made for children where possible, who are entrusted by God to husband and wife within the wider family and community. Barrenness in marriage is not the result of a curse or an excuse for divorce or taking another wife. Singleness through never marrying or death of a spouse is honourable and gives greater opportunity to devote wholehearted attention of God's work (Mt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:1, 7, 32-35). The apostle Paul recommends marriage over singleness when sexual passions cannot be controlled (1 Cor. 7:8, 9; 1 Tim. 5:11, 14).

'Behaviour change' in our sexual expression needs careful definition. Clearly God emphasizes the necessity of changing our behaviour to conform to his standards. Change occurs in the power of his Spirit, the light of his word, and the communion of his people. Behaviour change, including sexual, is implicit in our sanctification and adoption of the new nature in Christ (Rom. 6:11-18; Gal. 5:19, 22-25; 1 Pet. 1:13-16). This is very different from the common use of the term today, which is pragmatic rather than moral. Popular usage means the taking of appropriate measures to minimize risk, that is, 'harm reduction'.

### Focus on HIV/AIDS

Sexual faithfulness within marriage and abstinence outside of marriage are the most effective means to counter HIV, acting as a 'social vaccine'

against HIV. Uganda has demonstrated that even moderate moves toward 'zero grazing' (sexual relationships only within marriage) and rises in the age of sexual debut result in significant declines in the spread of HIV.

The Christian setting is the natural context for teaching on sexuality, gender, and sexual relationships, as well as to give accurate knowledge and counter widespread myths regarding these topics. Biblical, demonstrable behaviour change gives the worldwide church the privilege of presenting to humanity a realistic goal of sexual abstinence and faithfulness, a goal widely considered in secular circles to be unrealistic. To be effective, behaviour change communication needs to be educationally sound and must go beyond the lectern to training in life skills.

Sadly many will continue to be involved in risky sexual behaviour outside of marriage. Sexual activity in teenagers is the common practice in most cultures. This is true of non-Christians and of Christians alike. Half of new HIV infections occur in the 15-24 age group. Teenage girls are both more vulnerable biologically to HIV infection than boys, and also more likely to be targeted by older, often married, men.

At the same time delaying marriage for cultural or economic reasons contributes to the spread of HIV. Marital fidelity is protective, but only where it is mutual—the majority of married women who contract HIV get it from their partners. The quality of marriage relationships is highly relevant in the discussion of HIV/AIDS, as is the common practice in some cultures of separation of spouses for economic and

social reasons, which contributes to unfaithfulness.

With increasing HIV testing anticipated, especially in higher prevalence countries, the sensitive issue of discordant couples (one spouse positive and the other negative) will become more demanding. While moderate condom use is largely ineffective in preventing HIV transmission, in the case of discordant couples who want to continue in sexual relations strict condom use is clearly recommended. Even so, many partners will convert to HIV positive status and eventually leave double orphans requiring care.

### 7. Harm Reduction

The almighty God is the source and giver of all life (Gen. 1:27, 31, 2:7, 22; Ps. 139:13-16; Job 1:21, 12:10; Ezek. 37:1-6; Rom. 4:17; Phil. 4:3; 1 Tim. 6:13). Life is sacred and human beings are held accountable by God for the lives and needs of others (Gen. 4:8-15; 9:4-7; Deut. 24:10-21; Is. 58:6-7; Prov. 24:11; Jas. 1:27, 2:15-16). So precious is human life that God became flesh to make salvation and fullness of life possible for each of us (Jn. 10:10, 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:4-5; Tit. 2:14). God calls us to choose life over death within the cycle of sin, judgement, and grace (Deut. 30:19; Jer. 29:13-14; Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

None of us is righteous, hence none is to judge; judgement is left to God (Mt. 7:1-5; Jn. 12:47; Jas. 4:12). Instead, God's people are to be channels of God's grace on this earth (2 Cor. 4:15; 1 Pet. 4:10-11; Col. 4:6). By our words and deeds we live to see others experience the life and fullness of Christ through God's transforming

power (Rom. 15:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Pet. 2:12; Col. 1:28).

### Focus on HIV/AIDS

Behaviour change is commonly a long incremental journey rather than sudden transformation, and in every population some people are unable or unwilling to change behaviour that is causing harm to themselves, to those around them, and to society at large. This enslavement may be due to a complexity of one or more spiritual, physical, psychological, social, and economic factors. Harmful behaviour that transmits body fluids puts the individual and society at risk of HIV/AIDS; harm minimization that reduces the risk to the individual also benefits society by lowered HIV transmission rates.

Proven strategies include needle exchange, the use of condoms, anti-retroviral therapy, and the treatment of sexually transmitted infections. These do not guarantee protection nor cure to the individual; however, by reducing the overall impact of HIV/AIDS, incidence and prevalence rates will be less than if they are not used, particularly if integrated with audience-specific media campaigns, information and skills building programs, and similar public health measures aimed at lasting behaviour change.

Effective utilization of harm reduction measures extends the lives of those at risk, allowing further opportunities for the grace of God to work in individuals, families, and communities. For example, the use of condoms in discordant couples lowers the risk of virus transmission to the non-infected partner; anti-retroviral therapy for an HIV positive mother will give extra

time to her children before they become orphans. Christians involved in providing these measures are not condoning sin; rather they are demonstrating in deed and word the meaning of Paul's words about 'God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim. 2:3-4).

### 8. Suffering

Sickness and disease, injury and death, pain and sorrow come to us all (Gen. 3:15-19). All of us, Christians and non-Christians, experience suffering in our own lives and the lives of those around us. Suffering is complex: we see the wicked prospering and the righteous struggling to survive (Psalm 73). Suffering may be the consequence of actions of the sufferer, of the family and community to which that person belongs, of the society and wider world of the sufferer, of principalities and powers, or due to the fallen environment in which we live (Lk. 13:1-5; Jas. 1:2-4, 12; 1 Pet. 2:19-21, 3:17).

The book of Job demonstrates the dangers of ascribing cause, fault, and blame on the basis of imperfect understanding (Job 15:4-6, 22:4-11, 34:34-37). By so doing we may worsen rather than alleviate the anguish (Job 16:2-4, 19:2-3, 26:2-4). When confronted with those suffering, Jesus responded with grace and compassion and calls us to do likewise (Mk. 1:40-41, 5:25-34; Lk. 10:30-37). Suffering may be a barrier to the gospel, and Christian compassion may overcome that barrier. Suffering may be used by God to bring people to himself, to challenge Christians to respond, to awaken people to consequences of wrong thinking and behav-

our, and to call for trust and hope in him who suffered for us (Gen. 50:19-20; Ps. 119:67; Jn. 5:14, 9:1-41; Rom. 5:3).

In the midst of suffering, Christians are called to work for the alleviation of its causes and effects, and to point to Christ as the ultimate hope, to his righteous judgment as overcoming all injustice, and to eternal life as the blessing beyond the pain of this life (Is. 1:17; Mt. 6:33; Rom. 8:18-21; 12:19; Phil. 3:10-11).

### Focus on HIV/AIDS

Those affected by HIV and AIDS suffer emotionally, physically, relationally, and spiritually. They may be condemned as sinners or sexual deviants deserving their suffering; identified by the community as cursed or suffering because of a previous life; derided as being under the judgment of God, the spirits, or the ancestors; and exposed to stigma, discrimination, and ostracism. Their suffering is tremendous, and often their greatest need is a loving touch or word. Jesus was 'filled with compassion' as he reached out his hand to touch the man with leprosy—a human being stigmatized, discriminated against, and ostracized from society as many with AIDS are today—who came to Jesus on his knees begging to be made clean (Mk. 1:40-42).

Much of the suffering of people living with AIDS can be ameliorated by simple, relatively inexpensive attention to pain relief, treatment of opportunistic infections, and home based care by family and friends. The anguish of parents knowing their children are soon to become orphans, and the child watching its parents die, are very real

forms of suffering that Christians can together address.

While many people confronted by HIV/AIDS look for the 'cause' of their illness in witchcraft or something evil, Christians can point confidently to Jesus Christ as the one who accepted suffering and still fulfilled God's will for his life. Instead of asking, 'Why me?' or 'God, where are you?' he said, 'Your will be done.'

## 9. Church and Healing

Christianity has a long tradition of sacrificial caring for those rejected by the world, modelled largely on the ministry of Jesus. When challenged by the religious leaders of his day for associating with the marginalized and 'sinners', Jesus responded, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick' (Lk. 5:29-32, 7:36-50, 16:19-25, 19:5-10). Concern for those in need was a key characteristic of Jesus' claim to be 'the One' (Mt. 11:2-6; Lk. 4:18-21).

We understand that we follow in Jesus' footsteps and that spiritual, physical, emotional and relational healing is part of the ministry of God's renewed community (Mt. 9:2-7; Jn. 4:14-26, 17:18, 20:21; Acts 3:16). This may involve confession, forgiveness, restoration, restitution, and a new sense of identity and meaning. In many cases this results in the person in need rejecting bitterness and despair, and embracing salvation and hope. Only Christ can deal effectively with sickness and healing at the spiritual level: issues of shame, guilt, sin and forgiveness, demonisation and exorcism, defilement and cleansing, restoring shalom (Ps. 32:1-5; Mt. 6:14-15; Jas. 5:13-16).

## Focus on HIV/AIDS

Times of plague in past centuries have seen tremendous sacrifice by Christians and growth in the church. The HIV/AIDS pandemic presents the church with an unparalleled opportunity in our day—it is a call to the church to be the church, the renewed community under God. The important secular concept of positive living for those HIV positive takes on a deeper meaning when biblical values are included.

Opportunities for Christian organizations to be involved in healing always include care of the sick and needy, and may extend to anti-retroviral drug therapy, treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and opportunistic infections, needle exchange, and condoms for discordant couples and those who persist in sex outside of marriage. Care and harm minimization are important expressions of love and justice, and such measures offer proven benefit to those infected and affected as well as offering a degree of protection to society at large.

As the Christian community engaging in these activities, we recognize that our role from God is to care for those in need, that these responses are dealing with the results and not the causes of the problem of AIDS, and that we live in a fallen world. Non-Christians likewise contribute to battling HIV/AIDS in this world through care, counselling, research, finance, orphan care, and so on, and Christians should be encouraged to network as far as possible with all who similarly oppose evil and suffering.

Healing of the individual extends to incorporation into the body of Christ—

HIV positive yet totally accepted, an immune system decaying yet the assurance of eternal life, a sinner saved by grace and perfectly accepted by God irrespective of the cause of HIV infection. Sadly many of those suffering from HIV have experienced rejection by Christians and Christian leaders, because we have not acted as Jesus would.

Healing for the HIV positive person may involve physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual issues. God equips his church for this role, and blesses his people when the church is acting as Christ's agent of healing and hope.

### 10. Ultimate Hope

Christ the King will one day return suddenly to bring in his kingdom in its fullness (Is. 65:17-25; Mt. 24:30-31; 1 Thes. 4:14-17; Rev. 21:1-5). Until that time he has given to humanity a social mandate to populate the earth, to live by the values of the kingdom, to care for the earth and all it contains as stewards, and to actively oppose manifestations of evil (Gen. 1:28, 2:15, 19-20, 4:9-10; Ps. 50:10-12; Mt. 6:26-30). Because humanity includes those who do not recognize him as king, he has given an evangelistic mandate to make disciples of all peoples (Gen. 12:2-3; 1 Kgs. 8:41-43; Mt. 28:18-20, 24:14; Acts 1:8).

Those who serve Jesus now are committed to the task of seeing his name glorified by human beings turning their backs on wilful independence of God and submitting to Christ's lordship (Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 1:13-16; Eph. 2:1-5; Rev. 7:9-10, 14:6). As servants of the King, we are engaged in the affairs of his kingdom, using the

talents he has given us, which include opposing disease, poverty, suffering, injustice, corruption, oppression and all else that is contrary to the values of the kingdom (Amos 5:10-15; Is. 1:17; Mt. 6:10, 33, 9:35-10:1, 25:34-40). Christ came to destroy the devil's work (Eph. 6:10-20; 1 Jn. 3:8).

As part of a creation 'groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time' (Rom. 8:22-23), we are motivated by the sure hope of Christ's return to restore all creation to a glorious state in the fullness of the kingdom. We recognize that we cannot eliminate evil and its manifestations in this age, and eagerly await his coming to put right that which has been corrupted by sin (Mt. 26:11; Acts 3:21; 2 Pet. 3:11-13).

This future, eschatological sense of hope must be balanced by our present reality (Rom. 5:3-5). When we pray, 'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth,' we are confessing that only God can do away with our present order such that there may be 'no more death or mourning or crying or pain'. We are also calling upon him for strength and wisdom to speak and act as his representatives as we are now confronted by the present reality of that death, mourning, crying, and pain which calls us to practical support of those needing hope (Ps. 60:1-4; 2 Chr. 7:14; Mt. 6:10; Rev. 21:4).

The death, resurrection, and coming again of Christ provide us with a hope that transcends the present reality of sin, fear, sickness, and death (Jn. 11:23-27, 14:3; 1 Cor. 15:50-55). For the Christian, hope is intimately connected with faith and love (1 Cor. 13:13).

### Focus on HIV/AIDS

HIV and its consequences are clearly linked to the evils of our fallen world such as sin, poverty, inequity, war and violence, exploitation, and degradation of women. Like these evils, HIV/AIDS is limited to this age. While the person with AIDS who is rejected, alone, and in pain, can die in peace with the assurance of eternity with Christ and those likewise redeemed by grace, he or she needs to experience that hope in practical ways in the midst of suffering.

Jesus Christ is the basis of hope for the HIV positive person. The proclamation of the gospel, care for the infected and affected, prayer in accordance with God's will, freedom from fear, men and women moving toward a more biblical worldview and lifestyle, the worldwide church sharing its human and other resources, and God's people working in Christ's name to change unjust social structures, are all foretastes of God's kingdom coming in its fullness. In so doing we are fulfilling Christ's command to 'seek first his kingdom and his righteousness' (Mt. 6:33). Above all, God's new community is characterized by people with an unshakeable faith in God's promises who are committed to living out this hope in the world around them.

### 11. Evangelistic Mandate

The AIDS pandemic has added a new urgency to the mandate from Christ to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. There is something worse than dying with AIDS, as terrible as that is—and that is dying without Christ. Christ gives life and hope to those in fear of HIV and AIDS, and all Christians should take the opportunity to

share this good news of salvation through Christ alone.

Many people who fear being tested, many who learn that they are HIV positive, many who manifest the symptoms of AIDS, and many who are in need because of HIV/AIDS are open to the gospel communicated in word and deed. Christians who are living positively with HIV/AIDS should be available as powerful witnesses to unbelievers of God's power to save and give hope. So also should Christians who genuinely change their sexual behaviour in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. This witness is achieved through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit who enables them to live and speak according to God's word.

Church leaders, missionaries, theological educators, youth leaders, and evangelists should use their special roles to encourage all Christians to evangelize and to teach the truth about HIV/AIDS. Voluntary testing should be undertaken by all Christians, and especially by leaders, to send the message that Christ has overcome death and freed us from fear. Awareness programs, HIV support groups, home based care, orphan care programs, and other forms of practical help motivated by God's love should be used to break the silence, thereby opening doors to people's hearts for them to find hope in this life and the life to come.

### 12. Discipleship Mandate

We recognize that the AIDS pandemic has revealed the lack of Christlike living among Christians, and that high rates of HIV infection occur in many so-called 'Christian' nations. Stigmatizing, condemnation, immoral behaviour,

and lack of care for those who are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS evidence a lack of discipleship.

When the world sees that the lifestyle of Christians is different from that of non-Christians, we will be the kind of 'salt and light' that Jesus mentioned. Much effort has been expended by missions and churches to promote conversion, with insufficient emphasis on life 'in Christ'. Just as conversion to Christ is based on God's grace and total dependence on God, so living 'in Christ' is based on grace and dependence. True discipleship requires that Christians walk together in humility, honesty, accountability, confession, and forgiveness.

Christian organizations at all levels need to focus on the developing of disciples of Jesus Christ. Leaders should set the example in Christlikeness, yet be willing to confess their failures and sins. Issues of sexuality, marriage and singleness, gender, sexual behaviour, and stigma and discrimination should be purposefully addressed by national churches in the light of God's word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, based on a biblical theology and informed by other relevant disciplines. This may include socio-cultural practices and beliefs such as marriage partners living apart, bride price and dowry, initiation, sexual taboos, levirate marriage, witchcraft, curses, and the role of ancestors.

Christian organizations should go beyond preaching and traditional teaching methods to engage in life skills education that is sensitive to the needs of new and older Christians, young people and adults, men and women, and those HIV positive and negative. In this process youth, as the

age group most affected by HIV, need to be involved in decision making and peer education. We should practise prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit, and study Jesus' model of training his disciples for insights into appropriate forms of discipling in the context of HIV/AIDS.

### 13. Social Mandate

In order to begin to understand and effectively respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, a transdisciplinary and multisectoral approach is needed. Insights from theology, medicine and health, education, sociology, anthropology, politics, and economics are essential. Because HIV engages society in ways that are complex and only partly understood, all sectors of society need to respond in a spirit of cooperation rather than competition.

Instead of polarizing around the value or otherwise of the condom or needle exchange, Christian and non-Christian groups should act according to their 'comparative advantage'. In the case of Christian organizations, their advantages lie in their compassion for and experience in caring for the marginalized, sick, suffering, dying, bereaved, and orphaned; their understanding of spirituality, suffering, sin, evil, confession, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, and holistic healing; their capacity to mobilize committed care givers at the grassroots; their ability to bring a moral and ethical perspective to a situation and to influence human behaviour, including sexual behaviour; and their human and other resources. (To this list we might add prayer, spiritual warfare, the power of the Holy Spirit, and so on.)

We should not only deal with sin at the individual level, but also address social and structural evil. Christians should be advocates for orphans, widows, the elderly, children denied access to schooling, and the poor, in the context of HIV/AIDS. Issues for advocacy include access to care for those infected and affected by HIV, anti-retroviral drugs and treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission and opportunistic infections, access to voluntary counselling and testing, opposition to laws and practices promoting stigma and discrimination such as the dismissal of HIV positive employees, and repealing laws and customs which discriminate against women and the poor.

This outworking of God's social mandate may be appropriate at the local town or village level, regional and national level, or even internationally. In many countries, Christians can have a powerful voice when they speak together, in advocacy or as part of the political process.

#### 14. Caring Mandate

The Declaration of The All Africa Church and AIDS Consultation (Kampala, Uganda, April 1994) concluded with the following challenge:

We are watchmen standing in the gap and stewards of the hope of God offered in Christ. The pain and alienation of AIDS compel us to show and offer the fullness and wholeness that is found in Him alone. In this, our time of weakness, may the rule of Christ's love

in us bring healing to the nations.<sup>10</sup>

Our role as God's people is to care for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, showing the same love and acceptance that Christ demonstrated, and leaving judgment to God. This is not to condone the sin that might have led to becoming HIV positive; rather through our deeds and words we should encourage the person to look to Christ for healing. The Christian community should be a refuge for those in need.

Establishing a pastoral care committee to pray, visit, and channel resources will facilitate the local church's response. Needs in the wider community should be identified, especially those who are sick. Orphans and vulnerable children should also be identified, preferably before their parents die, and attention given to life skills, memory books (or boxes), and wills, as well as food, clothing, psychosocial support, and schooling needs. Care should also be provided for the care givers, including older people, with frequent training provided, and recognition made of this role.

#### 15. Global Mandate

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is more than a challenge to individual Christians and individual congregations—it is a wake-up call to the worldwide church. Christian organizations in affected countries should strategize and network with likeminded organizations,

---

<sup>10</sup> Found in Debbie Dortzbach (ed), *AIDS in Africa: The Church's opportunity* (Nairobi: MAP International, 1996).

with ministries of health, and with government organizations, national and international. National, regional, and local church leaders should speak out on HIV/AIDS, set the example of voluntary testing, and call on governments to act vigorously.

Churches and Christian organizations in the wealthier countries should partner with involved groups in affected areas trying to respond but lacking the resources to do so, recognizing the need for capacity building at all levels of the Christian community, contributing their own resources and pushing their governments to respond. Examples of good practice (or 'best practice') should be shared around the world. Our goal should be to enable responses that are effective, relevant, theologically sound, kingdom promoting, and examples of good stewardship.

### A Closing Thought

Dr Elizabeth Corwin Marum, Technical Advisor in HIV/AIDS, Centers for Disease Control, writes of the AIDS pandemic with particular reference to Africa, 'Just as history judges nations for their response to the slave trade or the extermination of Jews in WWII, our generation will be judged for how we respond to this catastrophe, this present day holocaust in Africa.'<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately her words may be prophetic not just for Africa but for the whole world.

---

<sup>11</sup> Katherine Halberstadt Anderson, 'AIDS: Our Samaritan Call' in *Wheaton* Vol 6, No 2 (Spring 2003), p. 6.

## Joseph Wise and Otherwise: The Intersection of Covenant and Wisdom in Genesis 37-50

Paternoster Biblical Monographs: Lindsay Wilson

This book offers a careful literary reading of Genesis 37–50 that argues that the Joseph story contains both strong covenant themes and many wisdom-like elements. The author examines how these 'wisdom-like elements' relate to the story as a whole. Chapter 37 establishes that God will cause Joseph to rise to prominence. The intriguing story of Tamar in chapter 38 is seen as a kind of microcosm of the entire Joseph story, with Tamar securing life, justice and reconciliation through her wise initiatives, leading ultimately to the preservation of the line of promise. Joseph's public use of wisdom is considered in chapters 39-41, where he uses power successfully and with discernment. Joseph's private use of wisdom occupies chapters 42-45, as Joseph brings about change in his brothers and extends forgiveness to them. Chapters 46-50 complete the story by weaving the concerns of the previous chapters into the fabric of God's purposes for his covenant people.

**Lindsay Wilson** is Vice Principal and Lecturer in Old Testament at Ridley College, University of Melbourne, Australia.

ISBN: 1-84227-140-7 / 229x152mm / 350pp / £24.99

**Paternoster, 9 Holdom Avenue, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK1 1QR, UK**

# Who are the Heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant?

John P. Davis

*Keywords: covenant, Abraham, seed, land, promise*

## Introduction

The media and public have concluded that 'being a Christian entails being pro-Israel'. A 'pro-Israel' stance normally infers that modern day Israel has some sort of divine or biblical right to the land of Palestine, i.e. that ethnic Israelites are the legitimate heirs of the Abrahamic covenant. How did this understanding come about, and is being 'pro-Israel' a necessary corollary of biblical Christianity?

'Popular American Christian eschatology', as represented in books such as the *Left Behind* series and in prophetic conferences of the last century, emphasized the unique status of Israel among the nations of the world in the plan of God. This plan included the ancient gift of what we know as modern day Palestine to the Old Testament people of God, known as Israel. Admittedly, if we read only the Old Testament, we would conclude that Israel is still God's nation and Palestine yet remains a gift and a promise to faithful

Jews. However, 'popular American Christian eschatology' does not represent the consensus of Christian theology worldwide, nor is it inexorably the position that best reflects biblical understanding.

All Christians must begin their reading of the Bible with the New Testament, without which there is no Christianity. Consequently, as they read the New Testament Christians become aware that the coming of Jesus introduces a fundamental change in regard to how the Old Testament is understood. This is especially true in regard to the Abrahamic covenant.

As Christians we read the Old Testament from the perspective of Christ's teaching that he was the Messiah whom the Old Testament anticipated. The Old Testament was promise; Jesus is fulfilment. Jesus was the only Israelite who truly fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law. He alone was the faithful covenant-keeper. As the quintessential seed of Abraham, he inherited all the promises given to Israel. Now, in light of the fulfilment in Jesus, all believers share his inheritance through their faith in Jesus Christ. Anyone, regardless of ethnicity,

can become an inheritor of the Old Testament promises. This is what the New Testament teaches clearly: *If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise* (Gal. 3:29).

In regard to the current struggle over the land in the Middle East, God's promises to Abraham belong to Jesus Christ and to all believers, Jews and Palestinians included, who have come to faith in Jesus Christ. Jews and Palestinians who continue to reject Jesus as the Messiah are in the same boat spiritually before God. Though one or the other may be 'more just' on certain ethical and political issues, neither Jews nor Palestinians are in greater favour with God or have a divine right to the land. *There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus* (Rom. 3:22-24).

Does the church of Jesus Christ have a legitimate and biblical basis to lay claim to the covenant given to Abraham? Greg K. Beale<sup>1</sup> and W. J. Dumbrell<sup>2</sup> view the Abrahamic Covenant in relationship to the broader biblical theme of creation/recreation. This context of a creation/recreation motif establishes a 'beyond-ethnicity' scope for the Abrahamic Covenant because it views the covenant in relationship to the creation-wide purposes of God. A New Testament understanding of the

Abrahamic Covenant fully allows that 'faith not ethnicity' defines the descendants of Abraham, and clarifies that New Testament believers are fully the 'seed of Abraham'. A Christian interpretation of the biblical texts containing the Abrahamic covenant establishes believers in Christ as the legitimate heirs of the promise.

Firstly, let us briefly survey the Old Testament covenantal texts and highlight their main points. Genesis 12:1-3 introduces God's purposes with Abraham as 'promise'.<sup>3</sup> The first four promises in verses 2 and 3, are all cohortatives, denoting Yahweh's resolve: 'I will make you [into a great nation]'; 'I will bless you'; 'I will make [your name great]'; 'I will bless [those who bless you]'.<sup>4</sup> The one non-perfective, 'I shall curse the one who treats you lightly', signifies a contingent future.<sup>5</sup>

Though absent in the text of the NIV, the Hebrew text contains a conjunction attached to these promises which signifies either purpose or result (in order that) after the imperative,<sup>6</sup> 'go'.<sup>7</sup> The combined sense is: 'Yahweh

1 In Kent E. Brower and Mark W. Elliot, *Eschatology in Bible and Theology* (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1997), pp. 11-52.

2 W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), pp. 11-43.

3 P. D. Miller's syntactic study of this passage is helpful. Patrick D. Miller, 'Syntax and Theology in Genesis XII, 3a.' in *Vetus Testamentum* (344. 1984), pp. 472-76.

4 Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 34.5.1a.

5 Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 31.6.2.

6 Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 34.6.

7 Yarchin adequately defends the command/promise structure of Genesis 12:1-3. William Yarchin, 'Imperative and Promise in Genesis 12:1-3', *Studies in Biblical Theology* 10 (October 1980), pp. 164-178.

said to Abram, Go ... to the land I will show you *that* I may make you into a great nation, *that* I may bless you, *that* I may make your name great.' At the end of verse 2, the imperative, 'you will be a blessing', signifies that these divine resolves have the further purpose that Abram 'be a blessing'. A similar construction is found in Ruth 4:11: 'May Yahweh make the woman who is entering your house like Rachel and Leah ... and so do valiantly in Israel.' God filled Abram with life that he in turn might mediate life to others. As Abraham became a blessing, verse 3 describes how God fulfilled his purpose of bringing blessing to others, i.e. by blessing those who blessed Abraham.

Though the land promise becomes an important focus of the covenant, it is significant that it is originally set apart from God's initial promises to Abraham. The idea of land is introduced in 12:1, but the concept of land as 'gift' is introduced upon Abraham's obedience and apart from the promise (see Gen. 12:7).

The additional promise, 'and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you', contrary to the translation in the *New International Version*, wherein the verb is taken as a passive, is better translated as 'find for themselves a blessing'.<sup>8</sup> This line of the covenant delineates the universal scope of God's redemptive and restorative program for the world.<sup>9</sup>

In Genesis 15:1-6, after having successfully overcome another threat to his occupation of the land, Abraham's doubt, in light of the absence of any offspring, is assuaged by divine assurance that a son will come from Abraham. Again, the innumerability of Abraham's seed is confirmed, this time being compared to the stars of heaven. This seed of Abraham, shares a corporate solidarity as indicated by the use of 'seed' in the singular. As we will see, this corporate solidarity raises the question of whether faith or ethnicity provides this solidarity among the seed of Abraham.

In Genesis 15:7 Yahweh's unsolicited affirmation concerning his promise of the land provokes from Abraham a question desiring assurance in 15:8: 'O Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?'. In response to Abraham's need of assurance, in 15:9-21 Yahweh elevates the promise of land for Abraham and his seed to the status of covenant.

First, Yahweh engages in a ceremony that confirms the inviolability of his covenant with Abraham and his seed. In obedience to God Abraham

---

both texts it is best to understand *barak* as 'get to themselves blessing' (Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp. 390-1). Dumbrell translates the phrases as 'win for themselves a blessing' or 'find for themselves a blessing' (Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, pp. 70-1). This is contrary to Gerhard Wehmeier's conclusion that the Niphal and Hithpael are distinct in meaning. Gerhard Wehmeier, 'The Theme "Blessing for the Nations" in the Promises to the Patriarchs and in the Prophetic Literature' in *Bangalore Theological Forum*. 6 (July-December), pp. 1-13.

8 Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, pp. 70-1.

9 It should be noted that *barak* is used in the Niphal in Gen. 12:3 and in the Hithpael in Gen. 22:18. Though the causative-reflexive sense is usually reserved for the Hithpael, it is also a legitimate scheme in the Niphal. In

gathers, divides, and arranges selected animals on the ground. In the darkness of the evening, Yahweh, in a visible manifestation of himself, passes alone through the midst of the divided animals, thereby taking upon himself an oath of self-malediction.<sup>10</sup>

The significance of this ceremony lies in God's asseveration, wherein he solemnly swears death upon himself should he fail to fulfil his promise to Abraham.<sup>11</sup> This oath-taking on God's part confirms the land promise of the Abrahamic covenant as unilateral, unconditional, and inviolable. It emphasizes the importance of the gift of land in the redemptive and restorative purpose that God is fulfilling through the Abrahamic covenant.

Another covenant text in Genesis 17 reaffirms the promise/covenant, adding the rite of circumcision as the external evidence of the parents' acceptance of the covenant and their desire for the continuity of the covenant through their seed. Though Yahweh had affirmed in reference to the land in chapter 15 his commitment to keep the promise, Genesis 17 makes it clear that receiving the benefit of his commitment is not without obligation on those who participate.

The covenant itself in this chapter is now described in terms of a gracious gift in 17:2. Verses 4 and 5 contain an additional covenant arrangement that Abraham will be the father of nations.

This is ultimately fulfilled in and through the church (Matt. 28:19; Rom. 4:16-17; Rom. 15:8-16). Also there is included an additional note in 17:7 that a relationship between Yahweh and Abraham's seed results from the establishing of this covenant. This promise extends to the true seed of Abraham, i.e. to Isaac, not Ishmael (Gen. 17:15-22) and to Jacob, not Esau (Gen. 27:27-9; 28:10-15). The gift of land is also reaffirmed in 17:8,

Circumcision is then set forth as the outward sign of the covenant relationship that exists between Yahweh and Abraham and his seed in verse 10: This rite was open also to Gentiles, the significance of which is brought out by O. Palmer Robertson:

This absolute openness to the incorporation of Gentiles into the community of Israel has far-reaching significance affecting the interpretation of massive portions of the Old and New Testaments. Many traditions of interpretation build on an implicit assumption that God has a distinctive purpose for the racial descendants of Abraham that sets them apart from Gentiles who respond in faith and obedience to God's program of redemption. This entire hermeneutical structure begins to totter when it is realized that 'Israel' could include non-Abrahamic Gentiles just as well as ethnically related Jews.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, though Israel maintained outward circumcision, they often lacked circumcision of the heart

---

10 O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1980), p. 130.

11 Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, pp. 130-1.

---

12 Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, p. 154

which is the true mark of the seed of Abraham (Rom. 2:28-29).

Another covenant text is Genesis 22 which records the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his seed, Isaac, in obedience to the command of Yahweh. Upon this forceful demonstration of Abraham's loyalty to Yahweh, the promise/covenant is now bound with an oath in 22:16, 'I swear by myself ...'

The oath-bound promise/covenant, employing cohortatives of resolve, reaffirms personal blessing to Abraham, the innumerability of Abraham's seed, an additional motif of victory over enemies, and blessing to the nations through Abraham's seed. The numerous seed and the victory over enemies are administrations of 'to bless.' Once again 'bless' signifies 'to confer abundant and effective life upon something ... someone'.<sup>13</sup>

The granting of this oath-bound promise/covenant is connected to Abraham's obedience. It is worth noticing that in the Abraham narratives (12-22), both the issues of Abraham's obedience and the blessing to the nations form an *inclusio* for the cycle.<sup>14</sup> If any conditionality is involved, as some have suggested, it is removed on the ground of Abraham's obedience.

Later both Isaac and Jacob had the covenant reiterated to them. Through-

out the Pentateuch are found frequent restatements and allusions to the promise/covenant.<sup>15</sup>

Having looked exegetically at the primary covenant texts, we will now proceed to highlight their significant elements from a New Testament vantage point.

### The Significant Elements of the Abrahamic Covenant

Clines recognizes three basic elements in the promise: posterity, divine-human relationship, and land.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, VanGemerén identifies four areas of the promise: a seed, a land, blessing to the patriarchs, and blessing to the nations.<sup>17</sup> VanGemerén's categories of blessing to the patriarchs and to the nations correspond to Clines' division of 'divine-human relationship.'

This author has chosen to follow Clines' three-fold breakdown as a concise encapsulation of the major elements of the Abrahamic covenant and has chosen to deftly exegete those elements as found in Gen. 12:1-3,7; 13:14-17; 15; 17:1-22; 22:15-18.

### The Promise of Posterity

The Abrahamic covenant often speaks of 'seed'. The Hebrew word for 'seed' and the related Greek word for 'seed'

13 John N. Oswalt, John N., *ἰσχυρὸς* in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Vol. 1. Edited by R. Laird Harris (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 132.

14 See Yarchin's discussion of these narratives wherein he sees imperative/promise 'gauged toward the formation of a sort of framing of the whole Abraham cycle....' (Yarchin, 'Imperative and Promise', p. 174).

15 David J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 1982).

16 Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, p. 31.

17 Willem VanGemerén, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1988), p. 104.

present a complex concept in identifying the recipients of the Abrahamic promise. 'Seed' is used at times to include the physical descendants of Abraham and those who share the faith of Abraham, whether physical seed or not; Galatians 3:16, Paul argues forcefully that 'seed' in the singular finds its ultimate reference to Christ as 'the' offspring of Abraham. This variegated usage produces perplexity in understanding, 'who are the recipients of the Abrahamic covenant?'

Part of the solution to this complexity is to understand that 'seed' is used to describe both a singular entity and a collective. The promise was given to Abraham and to his seed (Gen. 12:1-3,7; 15; 17:1-22; 22:15-18), i.e. both to Isaac (27:27-29) and to Jacob (28:10-15). Both Isaac and Jacob stood representatively in the Messianic office, an office fulfilled in Jesus Christ. McComiskey notes: 'The collective function of *zera* allows the writer to refer to the group or to a representative individual of the group.'<sup>18</sup> The focus is not on the physically related 'seed', for those who are not physically related can participate in the covenant (Gen. 17:9-14). The collective singular disallows any notion of 'seeds', physical and spiritual. There is but one seed.

The New Testament clarifies that Jesus Christ is the ideal representative seed, while those in Christ comprise the collective seed, i.e. the community of faith (Gal. 3:16,29). Isaac and Jacob cannot ultimately fulfil the promise. Only Jesus Christ can bless the earth in

a final sense. The collective seed has no identity apart from its relationship to the ideal representative, Jesus Christ.

This dual concept of 'individual representative' and 'corporate community of faith' is essential to understanding 'seed'. It appears that later in the progress of revelation the Davidic covenant expands on the royal status of the representative individual who guarantees the covenant and the New covenant expands on the spiritual nature of the corporate community of faith who participate in that covenant.

As indicated earlier, another step in resolving the complexity of 'seed' is to understand that 'seed' does not equate to 'physical descendants'. Though Ishmael was a descendant of Abraham, he was not the seed of Abraham to whom the promise was guaranteed. Likewise, Esau was a descendant of Isaac, yet was not in the line of promise. Also, there were many who were physically seed of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, yet who stood outside the covenant (Rom. 2:28-29).

Clearly, not all of the physical seed of Abraham inherit the promise. Only those physical descendants bound in a unique 'covenant' relationship or those non-physical seed who by faith enter that covenant of Abraham inherit the promise.

The unique relationship that establishes someone as the true seed of Abraham is one built on a faith participation in a divinely initiated covenant.<sup>19</sup> O. Palmer Robertson rec-

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Edward McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> See O. Palmer Robertson, 'Genesis 15:6, New Covenant Expositions of an Old Covenant Text,' *WTJ* 42 (1980b), pp. 259-289.

ognizes covenant as the bond that determines relations between God and his people:

By creation God bound himself to man in covenantal relationship. After man's fall into sin, the God of all creation graciously bound himself to man again by committing himself to redeem a people to himself from lost humanity. From creation to consummation the covenantal bond has determined the relation of God to his people.<sup>20</sup>

Daniel P. Fuller in his discussion of the seed of Abraham concludes that since faith is the prerequisite for participation in the Abrahamic covenant by both Jew and Gentile, then '... faith which produces obedience, rather than physical descent, is the primary aspect of the seed of Abraham'.<sup>21</sup>

It holds true then that physically related seed are not guaranteed participation in the Abrahamic promise, but the promise is insured '... to all the people of faith throughout all ages'.<sup>22</sup> Once again, the New Testament affirms that not all Israelites were inheritors of the promise (Rom. 2:28-29) and that some of those outside Abraham's physical seed do inherit the promise (Gal. 3:29).

The 'seed' of Abraham are those who by faith engage The Seed, whether physically related or not. It remains for

the New Testament to clarify the notion more specifically. In any case, there is no basis for a distinction between physical seed and spiritual seed in these accounts in Genesis.

### The Promise of Divine/human Relationship

The promise of divine/human relationship is bound in the terms of blessing and cursing. Divine blessing extended from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob and to their seed. The presence of blessing depicted the liveliness of the relationship between God and his people. McComiskey comments regarding blessing:

The blessing of the Abrahamic promise then connotes every aspect of God's favour, both temporal and spiritual, bestowed on the patriarchs. The emphasis seems to be primarily on the spiritual blessing of the promise. This secured a bright future for the progeny of the patriarchs in a land in which they could grow to become a great nation and affirmed that, in some yet unforeseen way, the offspring would become a blessing to Gentiles.<sup>23</sup>

This promise of personal blessing was reaffirmed to both Isaac (Gen. 26:3) and Jacob (Gen. 35:9-12). That relationship was dominant as the essence of this blessing is clarified in Gen. 17:1-8 where is found the concept of divine-human relationship inherent in the words, 'to be your God and the

---

20 Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, p. 25

21 Daniel P. Fuller, *The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism*. Doctoral Dissertation (Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1957).

22 McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise*, p. 17.

---

23 McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise*, p. 40.

God of your descendants after you' (v.7).<sup>24</sup>

Also, included in this divine/human relationship, is the promise that Abraham's name would be great. McComiskey explains:

It is the promise of an enhanced reputation.... Because of Abraham's faithfulness his name still lives today. His example of faith and his role as mediator of the promise permeate the teaching of both testaments.... If it were not for his obedience to God, his name probably would have been lost.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, this divine/human relationship includes the promise of blessing for those who favour Abraham and cursing for those who disfavour him. Cursing is the experience of one who curses Abraham. Again, McComiskey offers helpful insight into 'cursing':

The word *curse* in the statement of the promise clearly denotes the expression of an unfavorable attitude toward Abraham. Its emphasis on treating contemptuously or regarding as unimportant defines an attitude. It is an attitude toward Abraham that deems him unworthy of attention. It regards his example of faith as not important enough to emulate. One who disregards the fact that through Abraham God is urging everyone to faith in the promise is treating Abraham contemptuously, and may expect that

God will treat him or her the same way.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, the promise of divine/human relationship includes, as a result, the extension of blessing to the nations of the world. This guarantees that Abraham's seed will be the mediator of blessing to the nations. By invoking in faith the name of Abraham's God, the nations of the world share in the covenant to Abraham.<sup>27</sup> Through the Abrahamic covenant 'this rectification of curse is worldwide in scope.... "All the families of the earth" may turn from the history of curse and enter that of blessing by their own historical involvement with Abram and his descendants, the blessed of Yahweh.'<sup>28</sup>

Divine/human relationship entails responsibility for those in the covenant. Genesis 12:2b commands Abraham to be a blessing.<sup>29</sup> His living within covenant obligations is part of the link of bringing blessing to the nations of the world.

### The Promise of Land

The land is promised to Abraham in Genesis 12:5-7 and 13:13-17, covenanted in Genesis 15:7-18, and explicated in verses 19-21. This promise of land is repeated to Isaac (Gen. 26:3-4) and to Jacob (Gen. 28:3, 13-15; 35:9-12). Deuteronomy 12:8-32

<sup>24</sup> McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise*, p. 17

<sup>25</sup> McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise*, p. 40.

<sup>26</sup> McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise*, p. 41.

<sup>27</sup> See footnote number 40.

<sup>28</sup> Yarchin, 'Imperative and Promise', p. 172.

<sup>29</sup> Yarchin forcibly defends the command/promise structure of Genesis 12:1-3 (Yarchin, 'Imperative and Promise', pp. 164-178).

describes the land as ‘... a “resting place” (*menuha*) and an “inheritance” (*nahala*). It is the place where God will choose a site as a “dwelling for his Name” (v.11).’<sup>30</sup>

Land in the Old Testament is both a physical reality and a theological symbol. The 2,504 uses of ‘land’ in the Old Testament speak of its importance to theology.<sup>31</sup> Though God promised to Abraham a specific piece of geography, Abraham apparently understood it as more than geography (Heb. 11:16, 39-40).

Theologically, land is the gift of God. Land is the place of blessing. Land is the fulfilment of promise. Land is that sphere of life where one lives out one’s allegiance to Yahweh. Land is that place where Yahweh uniquely chooses to dwell and to reveal himself.<sup>32</sup> Land is the sphere of God’s kingdom activity.

This land promise retains a fulfilled, yet not consummated aspect. There are indications within Scripture that the land promise is fulfilled (Josh. 1:13; 11:23; 21:43-45), not yet consummated (Josh. 13:1-7; Ps. 95; Heb. 4:6-11), and yet to be consummated in a new cosmos (Heb. 11:39-40).

The conquest under Joshua was more than just a military invasion, it was a theological event wherein the pious in Israel had their faith confirmed in God’s promise to Abraham. Joshua 21:44-45 indicates that to a measure the promise was fulfilled in

Joshua’s day, in Solomon’s day (1 Kgs. 8:56) and in Nehemiah’s day (Neh. 9:7-8). However, since the land promise is eternally operative, each and every successive generation looks for the promise of rest in ‘land’.

Concerning the land promise, some of the poetic material (ca. Pro. 2:21) ‘... demonstrates the vital principle that although the promise is irrevocable in nature, its benefits are only enjoyed by those who maintain a proper relationship to God through the obedience of faith’.<sup>33</sup> Ultimately the realization of the land promise awaits the time of the resurrection, the removal of the curse, and the restoration of all things (Rev. 21-22) under the rule of Christ.

The prophets (cp. Zech. 14:1-11) maintain an expectation that there will be, not simply a return to the land of Palestine by the seed of Abraham, but an expansion of the territorial borders of the promised land to include the world.

Land was always important to the original purpose of God for man. At creation this land included the entire earth and all its resources. Man was given dominion over this land (Gen. 1:26-28). In the fall man lost this dominion.

In an act of redemptive grace, God granted to the seed of Abraham the land, then defined more narrowly (Gen. 15:18-21), as the nation of Israel was to enjoy in a microcosmic way what God intended originally and now eschatologically for the people of God (Rev. 21-22). As old Israel found rest in the

---

30 McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise*, p. 43.

31 Martens, Elmer, *God’s Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 97.

32 Martens, *God’s Design*, pp. 242-7.

---

33 McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise*, p. 48.

land of Palestine, so the church experiences a spiritual deliverance out of the bondage of Satan's world of sin and death to inherit rest in Christ (Heb. 3-4) and ultimately expects a restored cosmos.

To New Testament believers, this 'landedness' presently finds expression in their current experience with Jesus Christ (Col. 1:13) as the fulfillment of the theological symbol, accompanied by an expectation, as seen in the eschatology of the Old Testament prophets and of the New Testament, that the physical reality involves an expansion of the territorial borders to include the entire earth and ultimately the New Creation, as originally intended in Gen. 1 and 2.<sup>34</sup>

Whether ethnic Israel occupies the land of Palestine in a millennial kingdom or the New Creation as fulfillment of the promise to the seed of Abraham is a question built on a constricted understanding of the terms 'land' and 'seed'. Limiting the seed of Abraham to ethnic Israel confines the land promise to Palestine. Allowing for the inclusion of all believers in the seed of Abraham coincides with the expansion of the land promise to include the whole earth and ultimately the new cosmos.

As noted earlier, McComiskey pointed out that covenant theology does not demand an abrogation of the promise of land. To him the New Testament expands the promise of land to include the whole redeemed world under the kingship of Jesus Christ.<sup>35</sup> He

concludes his discussion saying:

The land will belong to the people of God because it is part of the larger triumph of Christ. Perhaps the definable borders of Canaan will no longer be important under the rule of David's son, but the promise of the land as a territorial heritage need not be considered as abrogated if one approaches the promises through covenant.<sup>36</sup>

The Abrahamic covenant is God's answer to the failures of Genesis 1-11. In those chapters the 'seed' of mankind became corrupted through the fall, the 'land' was cursed with a consequent loss of man's dominion over it, and the 'divine-human relationship' was ruptured. The Abrahamic covenant restores to believing mankind the promise of seed, land, and divine-human relationship.

The words of Dumbrell capture the significance of that covenant:

The covenant with Abraham is a response to the situation created by the fall, remotely, and immediately to the circumstance arising from the humanistic attempt by man to find the center of his world in himself. The aim of the Abrahamic covenant is to redress all the aberrations of Gen. 3-11. Striking as it does a note of 'land' and 'people' as concepts with which the blessings of this covenant will be bound up, it points initially to Israel's history about to unfold. Finally, however, it directs us to the political unity sought by men in Gen. 11:1-9. These will come to the 'great

<sup>34</sup> See Beale's discussion of 'Eschatological Conception' in Brower and Elliot, *Eschatology in Bible and Theology*, pp. 11-52.

<sup>35</sup> McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise*, pp. 199-209

<sup>36</sup> McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise*, pp. 208

nation', the company of the redeemed, which will rise by commitment to the God of Abraham. The call of that patriarch began a programme of redemption, which aimed at full and final restoration of man and his world. It will end with a series of relationships established by which the new creation will be brought into being.<sup>37</sup>

### The New Testament Perspective

We have looked at the significant elements of the Old Testament texts on the Abrahamic Covenant from a New Testament perspective. We will now listen to key New Testament texts as they affirm the church as the legitimate heir of the Abrahamic Covenant. The New Testament unequivocally affirms that the promises of this Covenant belong to all those who have faith in Jesus Christ. Look at some selected New Testament Texts relating to the Abrahamic Covenant.

In Romans 4 the apostle continues his argument from chapter 3 that justification is by faith alone. It is faith, not rite or law that establishes man in relationship to God. He illustrates from the experience of Abraham to whom justification was granted prior to the requirement of the rite of circumcision. The apostle contends that circumcision was not the link between Abraham and those who participated in the covenant with him, but rather 'faith' was that link (Rom. 4:9-12). Circumcision merely portrayed that faith. He further asserts that Abraham received the promise by faith prior to the giving

of the law (Rom. 4:13-15). Paul here understands the Abrahamic promise as primarily having redemptive significance.

His conclusion is that the promise comes by faith and that those who share Abraham's faith are related to the promise. 'He is the father of us all' and the promise is 'guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring' (Rom. 4:16).

In quoting Gen. 17:3 Paul equates the Gentile believers of Rome with the 'many nations' of the Abrahamic covenant. Both Genesis 17 and Romans 4 make no distinction between the 'many nations' and the 'seed of Abraham'. Abraham is the father of both. Romans 4 shows that Genesis 17 anticipated that 'seed of Abraham' and 'many nations' involved, not physical descent, but a relationship of faith.

Romans 9-11 is critical to any interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant because it concerns the apparent failure of the covenant promises to the nation of Israel. The apostle's explanation of God's past, present, and future relation to Israel sheds light on the intent and scope of the Abrahamic covenant.

In brief, Romans 9 dispels the notion that physical lineage constitutes Israel as the people of God and clarifies the true nature of that people. Using both the choice of Isaac over Ishmael in 9:6-9 and the choice of Jacob over Esau in 9:10-13, Paul argues that Abraham's true offspring are those who inherit the promise (v.8) and that those inheritors of the promise become such through their faith participation (9:30-10:21) in the sovereign plan of God (9:1-21).

God's plan to gather a people for

---

37 Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, p. 50.

himself also includes those Gentiles who share that faith response (9:22-26; 10:12-13). This inclusion of Gentiles is not to be perceived as a rejection of ethnic Israel. Though ethnicity in itself does not guarantee participation in the purposes of God, God's present extension of his grace to the nations does not exclude the availability of his grace to ethnic Israelites (11:1).

The salvation of any Israelite, such as Paul (11:1-2), Elijah (11:2-6), or Jews today, demonstrates God's faithfulness to his promises to ethnic Israel. God's present abrogation of Israel's favoured nation status and his glorious work among the nations, serve the dual purpose of saving Gentiles and arousing envy in Israelites.

However, the present extension of God's mercy to the Gentiles should not be construed as a negation of his promises for Israelites.<sup>38</sup> The partial hardening of Jews and the fullness of the Gentiles is the manner<sup>39</sup> in which God is accomplishing the saving of Israel. This is consistent with the Scripture that anticipated the coming of the Deliverer to Zion to take away sins. The Deliverer has come and is now gathering both Jew and Gentile unto himself (11:25-27). Martin

Woudstra argues that the 'saving of all Israel' in Romans 9 is presently being accomplished through the formation into one body of both Jew and Gentile and that Israel '... will not form a separate program or a separate entity next to the church'.<sup>40</sup>

The olive tree illustration sets forth the unity and continuity of the people of God. As the ingrafting of Gentiles does not replace the original branches, so the ingrafting of Israelites will not supplant the position of Gentiles.

The apostle's understanding of God's past, present, and future work among the nations and Israel coincides with the understanding that 'the undeniable center of Old Testament religion lies in the believer's response to the words of the covenant God that he would be Abraham's God and the God of his descendants'.<sup>41</sup> Included in those descendants are all those who have faith in Abraham's God.

In Galatians 3, as the apostle Paul discusses the relationship of the law to saving faith, he introduces Abraham as a paradigm of saving faith and inclusion in the promises of God. In the course of his discussion the apostle makes some interpretive statements, based on his understanding of the Genesis passages. These reflect on the Abrahamic covenant.

These statements are: (1) 'those who believe are children of Abraham' (v.7); (2) 'The Scripture foresaw that

---

**38** See, Robert G. Andrews 'Romans 11:11-32: The Future of Israel', Th.M. Thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1982.

**39** *houtos* is here used with the sense of 'in this way' (W. F. Arndt and, F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 602). As in its two other occurrences in this chapter (vv. 5, 31), it describes the manner in which something takes place.

---

**40** Martin Woudstra, 'Israel and the Church: a Case for Continuity', in *Continuity and Discontinuity* (Westchester, ILL: Crossway Books, 1988), pp. 236-7

**41** Woudstra, 'Israel and the Church', p. 227.

God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you" (v.8); (3) 'those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham' (v.9); (4) 'He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ' (v.14); (5) 'The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ' (v.16); (6) 'But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe (v.22).'

Paramount in these verses is the redemptive significance of the Abrahamic covenant as it finds its consummation in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ as the quintessential seed of Abraham is both the guarantor and inheritor of the promises of the covenant. Relationship with Christ, established by emulating the faith of Abraham, guarantees one's participation in the promises of the covenant. It is neither the keeping of the law nor physical descendance from Abraham that constitutes one as a child of Abraham, but rather faith in Jesus Christ.

These verses sanction the redemptive nature of the Abrahamic covenant. They confirm that covenant as the unifying factor between Jews and Gentiles and they substantiate the view that there is one people of God of all ages that share the covenants of Scripture which find their consummation in Christ.

Strikingly, Paul perceives redemption in Christ to be the dominant,

though probably not exclusive, feature of the Abrahamic covenant. He finds the consummation of the covenant in Christ and participation in the covenant to be predicated on relationship to Christ. Though admittedly an argument from silence, the 'earthly' nature of the promises to Abraham appears to be somewhat idealized in Christ. Though not necessarily eviscerating those 'earthly' elements of the Abrahamic covenant, it certainly places them in a new light.

In the pericope of Ephesians 2:11-22 Paul offers a contrast between Gentiles apart from Christ (2:12) and Gentiles in Christ (2:13). In delineating that contrast, Paul asserts the unity and continuity of the people of God. In the past Gentiles were able to participate in the covenants of God only through their identification with the God of Israel and their becoming proselytes of the religion of Israel. The advent of Christ ushered in a marked change in the focus of redemption.

No longer does common participation in the religion of Israel guarantee one's participation in the covenants, but rather common participation in the Lord Jesus Christ (the true Israel?) binds one to the covenants of promise. Formerly, Gentiles apart from Christ were 'excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise' (2:12); whereas now, Gentiles in Christ 'are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household' (2:19).

The dividing wall (2:14) between Jew and Gentile is destroyed through the person and work of Jesus Christ. A new order has been established, replacing the old and forbidding its

reconstruction. The temple of Judaism is now replaced with a temple composed of Jew and Gentile sharing alike the life of the Spirit (2:21-2). Paul interprets the present experience of believing Jews and Gentiles in Christ as that which was anticipated by the covenants.

In 1 Peter 2:9-10 Peter assigns the elevated status granted to Israel in Exodus 19:5-6 to New Testament believers. In unmistakable language—'a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God' (2:9)—Peter removes any thought of a continuing distinction between Jew and Gentile, formerly marked by supremacy of the nation of Israel.

Dumbrell cogently discusses the significance of these concepts in their Old Testament context. The Hebrew word for 'possession' derives from an Akkadian term which refers 'to what is owned personally or what has carefully been put aside for personal use'.<sup>42</sup> It is a term that is nuanced by its use in suzerain/vassal relationships.

The Hebrew words 'kingdom' and 'priests' and the corresponding Greek words describe the mediatorial function of the nation. In an ancient society the priest was separated from the people in order to serve them. The separation of the people was a demonstration of their allegiance to the covenant. Israel was to serve the world by being distinct from it.

By this new relationship, as disclosed in these terms, Israel is 'withdrawn from the sphere of common international contact and finds her point of contact as a nation in her rela-

tionship to Yahweh'.<sup>43</sup> Under this new constitution she becomes 'a societary model for the world. She will provide, under the direct rule which the covenant contemplates, the paradigm of the theocratic rule which is to be the biblical aim of the whole world.'<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, 'now, the people of God' (2:10) becomes the designation that Peter grants to New Testament believers, echoing the words of Hosea the prophet (Hos. 2:23).

### Summary

The preceding passages share a common perspective of the Abrahamic covenant and of the people of God. In these representative New Testament texts the covenant is largely viewed in light of its redemptive significance. Apart from Romans 11:25-27 a future restoration of the nation of national Israel is not even hinted at. Of the seventy-four references to Abraham in the New Testament, not one clearly focuses on the 'earthly' elements of the covenant. Even the acceptance of a mass conversion of Israelites at some future time does not demand a return to a former order of things.

Due to the advent of Christ, as the seed of Abraham, the New Testament text sees a semi-realized fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant in New Testament believers and an ultimate fulfilment for all those who are 'seed' of Abraham by faith.

The texts that consider the question of 'who are the legitimate heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant?' unequivocally

---

<sup>42</sup> Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, p. 85.

<sup>43</sup> Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, p. 87

<sup>44</sup> Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, p. 87.

answer, 'all of those who are in Christ Jesus'. In reference to the unity of believing Jews and Gentiles George N. H. Peters cogently concludes:

Both elect are the seed, the children of Abraham; both sets of branches are on the same stock, on the same root, on the same olive tree; both constitute the same Israel of God, the members of the same body, fellow-citizens of the same commonwealth; both are Jews 'inwardly' (Romans 2:29), and of the true 'circumcision' (Phil. 3:3), forming the same 'peculiar people,' 'holy nation,' and 'royal

priesthood'; both are interested in the same promises, covenants, and kingdom; both inherit and realize the same blessings at the same time.<sup>45</sup>

Who are the legitimate heirs of the Abrahamic covenant? The legitimate heir is Jesus Christ, the quintessential seed of Abraham. Israelite believers, Palestinian believers, and all other Gentile believers share in that inheritance through faith in Jesus Christ.

---

<sup>45</sup> George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*. Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1952), p. 404.

## Holy Land, Holy City: Sacred Geography and the Interpretation of the Bible

Robert P. Gordon

What connections exist between the physical geography of Israel and the spirituality of biblical faith? How was the physical space conceived as sacred space? In a wide-ranging study Professor Robert Gordon leads the readers from the the Garden of Eden to Jerusalem, from Genesis, through the Psalms and the Gospels to Revelation, and onwards through the patristic period, the Middle Ages and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He shows how topography of Jerusalem and its environment have been used in diverse ways in the spirituality of Jews and Christians over the centuries.

**Robert P. Gordon** is the Regius Professor of Hebrew at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of St Catherine's College. He is also the author of a commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel.

*'These studies combine readable exegesis, astute biblical theology, and responsible application.'*

Robert Yarbrough, Associate Professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

ISBN: 1-84227-277-2 / 229x145mm / 128pp / £12.99

**Paternoster, 9 Holdom Avenue, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK1 1QR, UK**

# J.R.R. Tolkien as a Christian for our Times

Jeffrey L. Morrow

**KEYWORDS:** *Mythology, philology, religion, literature, sub-creation, euchatastrophe*

## Introduction

J.R.R. Tolkien is perhaps more popular than ever, due to the recent Hollywood instalments of 'The Lord of the Rings' films. In 1997 numerous polls were taken in England on the most important English book of the century. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy won hands down on all of these polls.<sup>1</sup> Many in British academia were outraged at the results. Commenting on this outrage, Joseph Pearce observes, 'Rarely has a book caused such controversy and rarely has the vitriol of the critics highlighted to such an extent the cultural schism between the

literary illuminati and the views of the reading public.'<sup>2</sup> Literary critics were not the only ones with negative reactions to Tolkien's works. Some Christians view Tolkien's books, as well as the recent Hollywood films, with suspicion, fearing unwholesome influences from witchcraft and paganism, and maybe even Satanism.<sup>3</sup> We may remind such sceptics that the great Christian apologist C.S. Lewis was Tolkien's biggest fan, writing in a review of his *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, 'Here are beauties which pierce like swords or burn like cold iron; here is a book that will break your heart...good beyond hope.'<sup>4</sup>

Far from being inherently dangerous, these books are great Christian works that help feed one's faith, rather than subvert it. As a testimonial, Garin Dickinson explains these stories'

---

1 Joseph Pearce, *Tolkien: Man and Myth* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), pp. 1-10; and Joseph Pearce, 'True Myth: The Catholicism of *The Lord of the Rings*,' in *Celebrating Middle-Earth: The Lord of the Rings as a Defense of Western Civilization*, ed. John G. West, Jr. (Seattle: Inklings, 2002), pp. 83-84.

---

2 Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 2; and Pearce, 'True', p. 84.

3 Pearce, 'True', p. 85.

4 On the back cover of J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part II: The Two Towers* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975).

effect upon his own faith life: 'In my ongoing struggle up the path of Christian maturity, Tolkien's exposition has been my roadmap.'<sup>5</sup> Pearce urges that Tolkien's narratives be required reading for Christian families, right alongside Lewis's *Narnia* series.<sup>6</sup> I wish to suggest that rather than some Satan-influenced fantasy writer, J.R.R. Tolkien is in fact a model Christian for our times, a man who preached Christ not only through his writings, but also in his daily life; who challenged the scholarly community in his field of expertise, as an informed Christian, and who lived a life passionate for Christ. In short, Tolkien is a man, in whom 'we shall discover the soul of a Christian mystic....'<sup>7</sup>

### Early Life

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born in South Africa in 1892.<sup>8</sup> Both of his parents died when he was relatively young; first his father, then his mother after he had moved to England.<sup>9</sup> Before her death, Tolkien's mother had converted, along with her children, from a nominal Anglican upbringing to the Catholic Church, in which they began to experience a vibrant Christian faith.<sup>10</sup> The vibrancy in the Catholic Church in England at this time was not

unique to the Tolkiens, for it had been influenced by the copious number of converts from Anglicanism, including such notable Christians as John Henry Newman and G.K. Chesterton. Chesterton's works would have an effect upon Tolkien, at least indirectly.<sup>11</sup>

After his mother's death, Tolkien and his younger brother were raised by Father Francis Morgan, who became his legal guardian, and, among other things, taught the young Tolkien Christian apologetics.<sup>12</sup> Morgan had studied under Newman earlier in life, and this intellectual influence on Tolkien was to be profound.<sup>13</sup> Tolkien's faith was much more than intellectual, however, and his personal relationship with God began to transcend all aspects of his life.<sup>14</sup> George Sayer, friend and companion to both Tolkien and Lewis, notes that Tolkien was extremely loyal to the Christian faith Morgan instilled in him in his youth.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, 'The Christianity he had learned both from his mother and from Father Francis shaped his whole view of life to such an extent that sacrifices were borne willingly, if grudgingly, when they were deemed necessary to the pursuit of virtue.'<sup>16</sup>

5 Garrin W. Dickinson, 'The Subversion of Middle-Earth: Tolkien's Symphony of Virtue Meets Hollywood,' *Touchstone* (October 2002), p. 26.

6 Pearce, 'True', p. 85.

7 Pearce, 'True', p. 85.

8 Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 12.

9 Pearce, *Tolkien*, pp. 13 and 20.

10 Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 16.

11 Joseph Pearce, 'Tolkien and the Catholic Literary Revival', in *Tolkien: A Celebration: Collected Writings on a Literary Legacy*, ed. Joseph Pearce (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), p. 117.

12 Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 26.

13 Bradley J. Birzer, *J.R.R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth: Understanding Middle-Earth* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2002), p. 48.

14 Birzer, *J.R.R.*, p. 46.

15 George Sayer, 'Recollections of J.R.R. Tolkien', in *Tolkien*, ed. Pearce, p. 14.

16 Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 31.

Concerning the most significant aspects of his life, Tolkien himself writes, 'And there are a few basic facts, which however drily expressed, are really significant. For instance I was born in 1892 and lived for my early years in "the Shire" in a premechanical age. Or more important, I am a Christian (which can be deduced from my stories)...'<sup>17</sup> Tolkien's Christianity took on a specific flavour as he began to study the origins of Christianity in England and in Northern Europe, and as he developed his artistic abilities. Janet Blumberg takes note of this specific character of his spirituality, 'To an artist and a Christian such as Tolkien, Christian devotion entails a spirituality much more like the battlefield heroism celebrated by the Anglo-Saxons, when they based their actions not on their own survival or success, but on a personal loyalty to the goodness of a master whose goodness is best seen in the moment in which master has fallen before the enemy.'<sup>18</sup>

As an adolescent, Tolkien fell in love with his future wife, Edith, but was forbidden to pursue a relationship with her by his guardian.<sup>19</sup> Tolkien dutifully obeyed for a number of years, until he was certain that this was in fact the woman he would marry. He was, however, soon whisked away to France to fight in World War I.<sup>20</sup> Thus,

in 1916 Tolkien found himself fighting the Germans in France at the infamous Battle of Somme, 'one of the bloodiest of the war. On the first day alone, Germans slaughtered over 20,000 French and British soldiers.'<sup>21</sup> He lost the majority of his school friends in the carnage of that battle.<sup>22</sup>

The Battle of Somme had a profound affect upon the young Tolkien, as he later explained in an interview in 1968, 'The war made me poignantly aware of the beauty of the world .... I remember miles and miles of seething, tortured earth, perhaps best described in the chapters about the approaches to Mordor. It was a searing experience.'<sup>23</sup> Concerning this very passage in *The Lord of the Rings*, specifically the narration of the Dead Marshes, C.S. Lewis, another veteran of the trenches, noted that, 'only someone who had witnessed the trenches of war firsthand could have written this passage'.<sup>24</sup> Needless to say, the seeds of some of the darker passages in Tolkien's works are to be found in the trenches.

Tolkien returned home married and began to experience a lifetime of love with his wife and later with their children. The story in Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* concerning Beren and Lúthien was inspired by his wife. This story is at the very core of Tolkien's mythical world, within which is set *The*

---

17 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Humphrey Carpenter (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 288.

18 Janet Leslie Blumberg, 'The Literary Backgrounds of *The Lord of the Rings*,' in *Celebrating*, ed. West, pp. 75-76.

19 Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 27.

20 Pearce, *Tolkien*, pp. 37-38.

---

21 Birzer, *J.R.R.*, p. 2.

22 Elwin Fairburn, 'J.R.R. Tolkien: A Mythology for England', in *Tolkien*, ed. Pearce, p. 75.

23 Birzer, *J.R.R.*, pp. 2-3.

24 Birzer, *J.R.R.*, p. 114.

*Lord of the Rings*.<sup>25</sup> It is also the basis for the love story concerning Aragorn and Lady Arwen.<sup>26</sup> In a letter to his son Christopher, Tolkien wrote concerning what he would wish to be inscribed on his wife's tombstone:

Edith Mary Tolkien

1889-1971

Lúthien

:brief and jejune, except for *Lúthien*, which says for me more than a multitude of words: she was (and knew she was) my *Lúthien*...I never called Edith *Lúthien*—but she was the source of the story that in time became the chief part of the *Silmarillion*...the dreadful sufferings of our childhoods, from which we rescued one another, but could not wholly heal the wounds that later often proved disabling; the sufferings we endured after our love began...these never touched our depths nor dimmed our memories of our youthful love. For ever (especially when alone) we still met in the woodland glade, and went hand in hand many times to escape the shadow of imminent death before our last parting.<sup>27</sup>

Despite his wife's jealousy of Tolkien's relationship with Lewis, the latter described Tolkien as, 'the most married man he knew'.<sup>28</sup>

Some have hypothesized that Tolkien had a warped view of sexuality, since his stories never explicitly, or even implicitly, hint at sexual acts. Tolkien displayed a very Christian view of sex, however, as in the letter he wrote to Lewis, wherein he explained to the bachelor, 'Christian marriage is not a prohibition of sexual intercourse, but the correct way of sexual temperance—in fact probably the best way of getting the most satisfying *sexual pleasure*, as alcoholic temperance is the best way of enjoying beer and wine.'<sup>29</sup> Tolkien loved his children dearly; every Christmas he would write a story in the form of a letter to his children, to help them enjoy Christmas as a very special occasion. These letters were later published as 'The Father Christmas Letters'.<sup>30</sup>

### Christian Witness in the Academy

Gandalf, one of Tolkien's most famous characters, said, in *The Return of the King*, '(I)t is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till.'<sup>31</sup> Tolkien lived these words in his own life, which is one of the reasons his family was so important to him; they were an essential part

---

25 Stratford Caldecott, 'Over the Chasm of Fire: Christian Heroism in The Silmarillion and The Lord of the Rings', in *Tolkien*, ed. Pearce, pp. 22-23.

26 Caldecott, 'Over', p. 25.

27 Tolkien, *Letters*, pp. 420-421.

28 Sayer, 'Recollections', p. 14.

---

29 Tolkien, *Letters*, p. 60.

30 Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 42.

31 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part III: The Return of the King* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975), p. 190.

of his Christian ministry. Tolkien proved an important influence in the circles in which he interacted with others, in the fields that he knew. This is true in his academic pursuits as well as with family and friends. In 1915, before shipping off to war, Tolkien earned first class honours in his English Language and Literature final exam, which practically guaranteed him an academic position after the war.<sup>32</sup>

Tolkien was to become a professor of English at the University of Oxford. While it was rare for Oxford professors to receive standing ovations, these were frequent occurrences for Tolkien, despite the fact that he often mumbled during his lectures.<sup>33</sup> The University of Oxford, former home of the 'father of Comparative Religion', F. Max Müller, provided many challenges to Tolkien's faith. These challenges notwithstanding, while it is true that 'Decades as an Oxford don brought him into contact with every shade of opinion...he remained convinced of the objective truth of his religious convictions'.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Tolkien frequently criticized his fellow scholars for their anti-religious methodologies. He would fully agree with Peter Kreeft's statement that, 'some truths are so obvious that only experts can deny them'.<sup>35</sup> Or, as Tolkien himself quipped, 'The dwarf on the spot sometimes sees things missed by the travelling giant ranging many

countries.'<sup>36</sup>

In a parable he wrote, in an essay on *Beowulf*, Tolkien deftly criticized these literary critics:

A man inherited a field in which was an accumulation of old stone, part of an older hall. Of the old stone some had already been used in building the house in which he actually lived, not far from the old house of his fathers. Of the rest he took some and built a tower. But his friends coming perceived at once (without troubling to climb the steps) that these stones had formerly belonged to a more ancient building. So they pushed the tower over, with no little labour, in order to look for hidden carvings and inscriptions, or to discover whence the man's distant forefathers had obtained their building material. Some suspecting a deposit of coal under the soil began to dig for it, and forgot even the stones. They all said: 'This tower is most interesting.' But they also said (after pushing it over): 'What a muddle it is in!' And even the man's own descendants, who might have been expected to consider what he had been about, were heard to murmur: 'He is such an odd fellow! Imagine his using these old stones just to build a nonsensical tower! Why did not he restore the old house? He had no sense of proportion.' But from the top of

---

32 Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 37.

33 Birzer, *J.R.R.*, pp. 4-5.

34 Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 23.

35 Peter Kreeft, 'Wartime Wisdom: Ten Uncommon Insights about Evil in *The Lord of the Rings*', in *Celebrating*, ed. West, p. 32.

---

36 J.R.R. Tolkien, 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics', in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins, 1990), p. 10.

that tower the man had been able to look out upon the sea.<sup>37</sup>

Although this parable is focused against trends in *Beowulf* scholarship at the time, it would probably summarize Tolkien's feelings towards certain trends in biblical scholarship as well. This fact becomes even more poignant when it is realized that the longing for the sea may be compared to the longing for heaven in Tolkien's works and even in the Old English texts which inspired Tolkien's vision.<sup>38</sup>

Tolkien's career was as an English philologist at Oxford, with a specialty in Mercian, a dialect of Anglo-Saxon.<sup>39</sup> In actuality, Tolkien was one of the world's foremost authorities on the English language, as well as the numerous dialects of that tongue's ancestors.<sup>40</sup> He had a passion for philology, the study of language.<sup>41</sup> He fell in love with the study of Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, and Welsh at an early age.<sup>42</sup> He had specifically felt an attraction to the history of the British Isles, and consequently their languages and literature.<sup>43</sup> Tolkien studied a number

of different languages, including: Afrikaans, Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Finnish, French, Gallic, German, Gothic, Greek, Hebrew, Icelandic, Italian, Latin, Norse, Old Slavonic, Spanish, and Welsh. He mastered all the dialects of Old and Middle English.<sup>44</sup> Tolkien even invented his own languages for his stories, creating them so they would evolve as real languages would evolve; he created at least 3 different fully-functional languages for his Middle-Earth.<sup>45</sup> One of the ways he brought his Christian faith into this aspect of his scholarship was to emphasize the importance of the Bible for preserving languages.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, Tolkien translated the book of Job from French into English (although he consulted the Hebrew text) for the Jerusalem Bible.<sup>47</sup> Within the book of Job is found a dissonance between appearances and reality.<sup>48</sup> Tolkien relies on this theme throughout his own literary works. In addition, Tolkien worked meticulously to be faithful in his translation, ergo the consultation of the Hebrew text, and at the same time, he used his skills as a philologist and literary artist to write a beautiful translation.

There were numerous other ways in which Tolkien brought his Christianity

---

37 Tolkien, 'Beowulf', pp. 7-8.

38 Blumberg, 'Literary,' pp. 79-80, where she notes, 'the link between yearning for the sea and Art itself, Art as the mediation that embodies love for the beauty of this world and desire for those far-off gleams of a higher world'.

39 Birzer, *J.R.R.*, p. 3.

40 Pearce, *Tolkien*, pp. 36-37.

41 J.R.R. Tolkien, 'A Secret Vice', in *Monsters*, ed. Tolkien, pp. 198-223; and J.R.R. Tolkien, 'On Translating Beowulf', in *Monsters*, ed. Tolkien, pp. 49-71.

42 Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 32.

43 J.R.R. Tolkien, 'English and Welsh', in *Monsters*, ed. Tolkien, p. 162.

---

44 See especially, Tolkien, 'English', pp. 162-197.

45 Sayer, 'Recollections', p. 15.

46 Tolkien, 'English', p. 165.

47 Clyde S. Kilby, *Tolkien and the Silmarillion* (Wheaton, Illinois: Harold Shaw Pub., 1976), p. 54.

48 Peter Kreeft, *Three Philosophies of Life: Ecclesiastes (Life as Vanity), Job (Life as Suffering), and Song of Songs (Life as Love)* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), p. 65.

to bear on his scholarship. Tolkien's Christianity informed his analysis of Old and Middle English texts. These documents in turn informed Tolkien's myth-making, as he admits, 'If I may once more refer to my work, *The Lord of the Rings*, in evidence: the names of persons and places in this story were mainly composed on patterns deliberately modeled on those of Welsh....'<sup>49</sup> He was likewise influenced by High Medieval literature as by Anglo-Saxon literature.<sup>50</sup> This was bound to have an affect on Tolkien's spirituality as well, as Blumberg explains,

Like Anglo-Saxon literature, High Medieval literature coincided with a time of intense Christian spirituality and renewal; the *Pearl*-poet, for example, shows the influence of the Wycliffite revival going on at Oxford in the poet's lifetime, with its critique of ecclesiastical legalism and its dual emphasis on salvation by grace and on the availability of a vernacular Bible.<sup>51</sup>

This '*Pearl*-poet,' of which Blumberg speaks, was central to Tolkien's academic research, as she observes, 'Tolkien, while intimately acquainted with all of the great works and movements of the High Medieval period, used his own scholarly life to work primarily on the works of a lesser-known (but equally brilliant) English contemporary of Chaucer, the nameless North-west Midlands poet who wrote *The Pearl* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*....'<sup>52</sup>

These sentiments are supported by Tolkien's own words:

*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* remains the best conceived and shaped narrative poem of the Fourteenth Century, indeed of the Middle Age, in English, with one exception only. It has a rival, a claimant to equality not superiority, in Chaucer's masterpiece *Troilus and Criseyde*. That is larger, longer, more intricate, and perhaps more subtle, though no wiser or more perceptive, and certainly less noble. And both these poems deal, from different angles, with the problems that so much occupied the English mind: the relations of Courtesy and Love with morality and Christian morals and the Eternal Law.<sup>53</sup>

Tolkien was able to bring his Christianity to bear in many aspects of his professional work as an English philologist. He argued that non-Christian mythology was an attempt at expressing some of God's truth.<sup>54</sup> This becomes important when trying to understand his views concerning the original meeting of Christianity and the non-Christian European North. He believed that the Christianity which the first English converts encountered was neither fatalistic nor dualistic.<sup>55</sup> Blumberg brings the most salient features of this culture to the fore, instructing, 'When you think of the

49 Tolkien, 'English', p. 197 nt. 33.

50 Blumberg, 'Literary', pp. 67 and 71.

51 Blumberg, 'Literary', p. 72.

52 Blumberg, 'Literary', p. 71.

53 J.R.R. Tolkien, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', in *Monsters*, ed. Tolkien, p. 105.

54 Birzer, *J.R.R.*, p. xxiii.

55 Blumberg, 'Literary', p. 69.

legacy of what Tolkien absorbed from Anglo-Saxon literature, then think of a dark and fatalistic worldview that does not fear darkness or run away from the battle. Even in defeat, what matters is *mod*—the inward goodness that gleams out more strongly (“mod shall be the more”) when we are being overwhelmed and defeated.<sup>56</sup> This is central to the understanding of Christianity in this culture. Tolkien understood that, ‘In this Old English setting, what God suffers on the Cross reveals God’s generosity and goodness, God’s truly faithful inwardness, in a manner in which no other event or action could do.’<sup>57</sup>

It is in this context that Tolkien reinterprets *Beowulf*. Tolkien argues that the author was a Christian.<sup>58</sup> The shift from pre-Christianity to Christianity is not complete in *Beowulf*, but it is begun, Tolkien maintains.<sup>59</sup> He elaborates, ‘Its author is still concerned primarily with *man on earth*, rehandling in a new perspective an ancient theme: that man, each man and all men, and all their works shall die. A theme no Christian need despise.’<sup>60</sup> This bespeaks the text’s ‘pagan’ origins; nevertheless, ‘As the poet looks back into the past, surveying the history of kings and warriors in the old traditions, he sees that all glory (or as we might say “culture” or “civilization”) ends in night.’<sup>61</sup>

No solution is provided, instead, ‘We get in fact a poem from a pregnant moment of poise, looking back into the pit, by a man learned in old tales who was struggling, as it were, to get a general view of them all, perceiving their common tragedy of inevitable ruin, and yet feeling this more *poetically* because he was himself removed from the direct pressure of its despair.’<sup>62</sup> The author, according to Tolkien, was familiar with the pre-Christian traditions of this region. However, as a Christian himself, he had no cause for despair. Tolkien concludes, ‘He could view from without, but still feel immediately and from within, the old dogma: despair of the event, combined with faith in the value of doomed resistance.’<sup>63</sup>

Tolkien critiqued another scholar more directly; F. Max Müller. Müller was a German comparative philologist who, like Tolkien, taught at the University of Oxford at the turn of the century. He is commonly known as the father of *religionswissenschaft*, the ‘science of the study of religion’, which in conjunction with *religionsgeschichte*, ‘history of religion’ popularized by Sigmund Freud, came to be known as ‘Comparative Religion’. Müller argued that mythology was ‘diseased language’, and that was the origin of religion as well. Verbs were used to describe the behaviour of objects like the sun and moon, and gendered nouns were used to name these objects. Down through the ages, people forgot that these were merely words and attributed the idea that these objects were

---

56 Blumberg, ‘Literary’, p. 66.

57 Blumberg, ‘Literary’, p. 66.

58 Blumberg, ‘Literary’, p. 58; Birzer, *J.R.R.*, p. 35; and Tolkien, ‘Beowulf’, p. 23.

59 Tolkien, ‘Beowulf’, p. 23.

60 Tolkien, ‘Beowulf’, p. 23.

61 Tolkien, ‘Beowulf’, p. 23.

---

62 Tolkien, ‘Beowulf’, p. 23.

63 Tolkien, ‘Beowulf’, p. 23.

divine. Tolkien critiques Müller, countering his theory of religion's origin.

Tolkien grants, 'the making of language and mythology are related functions'.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, he was also influenced by Owen Barfield's theory that language derived from mythology, and not vice versa.<sup>65</sup> Colin Duriez explains, 'Like C.S. Lewis, Tolkien was persuaded by the view of their mutual friend, Owen Barfield, that language and symbolism have become increasingly abstract through history. In Tolkien's beginning, there are real elves (and a real Númenorean civilization). Now there is merely an elven quality to human life, which some can see clearly and others fail to perceive it at all.'<sup>66</sup> Tolkien addresses Müller directly in his 1939 Andrew Lang lecture entitled, 'On Fairy-Stories'.<sup>67</sup>

Tolkien remarks, 'Max Müller's view of mythology as a "disease of language" can be abandoned without regret....You might as well say that thinking is a disease of the mind. It would be more near the truth to say that languages, especially modern European languages, are a disease of mythology.'<sup>68</sup> Tolkien's potent criticism for Müller's theory, which proves difficult for such a theory to answer, concerns the origin of the personification itself, if there is no being out there. He points out, 'Let us assume for the

moment, as this theory assumes, that nothing actually exists corresponding to the "gods" of mythology: no personalities, only astronomical or meteorological objects. Then these natural objects can only be arrayed with a personal significance and glory by a gift, the gift of a person, of a man. Personality can only be derived from a person.'<sup>69</sup>

Tolkien has his own theology of fantasy to go along with these criticisms. He argues that fantasy is an escape into reality. He contends that fantasy helps us to see things as they actually are, the way we experienced those around us upon our first meeting; beautiful and exciting.<sup>70</sup> In response to a critic who condemned fantasy, Tolkien responded with the following poem:

Although now long estranged,  
 Man is not wholly lost nor wholly  
 changed.  
 Dis-graced he may be, yet is not de-  
 throned,  
 and keeps the rags of lordship once  
 he owned:  
 Man, Sub-creator, the refracted  
 Light  
 through whom is splintered from a  
 single White  
 to many hues, and endlessly com-  
 bined  
 in living shapes that move from  
 mind to mind.  
 Though all the crannies of the  
 world we filled  
 with Elves and Goblins, though we  
 dared to build  
 Gods and their houses out of dark

---

64 Tolkien, 'Secret', p. 210.

65 Birzer, *J.R.R.*, p. 30.

66 Colin Duriez, 'The Theology of Fantasy in Lewis and Tolkien', *Them* 23 (February 1998), p. 47.

67 J.R.R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy-Stories', in *Monsters*, ed. Tolkien, pp. 109-161.

68 Tolkien, 'On Fairy', pp. 121-122.

---

69 Tolkien, 'On Fairy', p. 123.

70 Tolkien, 'On Fairy', p. 146.

and light,  
and sowed the seed of dragons—  
'twas our right  
(used or misused). That right has  
not decayed:  
we make still by the law in which  
we're made.<sup>71</sup>

Tolkien believed that this form of human creativity reflected divine creativity, and was hence a function of our being created in the image of God. The highest form of this mythmaking is the 'eucatastrophe', the sudden unexpected joy when all appears lost.<sup>72</sup> As he explains, 'the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous "turn" ... it is a sudden and miraculous grace....'<sup>73</sup> He is quick to point out that the eucatastrophe 'does not deny the existence of *dycatastrophe*, of sorrow and failure...it denies...universal defeat....'<sup>74</sup> It is in Tolkien's application of this to Christianity, that we find his largest influence on C.S. Lewis.

C.S. Lewis, arguably the greatest Christian apologist of the twentieth century, converted to Christianity in large part because of his discussions with J.R.R. Tolkien; the other major influences being G.K. Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man*, Owen Barfield's discussions, Hugo Dyson's conversations, and the positive responses of sceptical colleagues to Christian claims.<sup>75</sup> The influence of Tolkien on

Lewis can be gauged by the fact that Lewis dedicated his famous book *The Screwtape Letters* to Tolkien.<sup>76</sup> While a professor, Tolkien formed a club, which Lewis joined, where they would read Icelandic sagas.<sup>77</sup> Tolkien and Lewis thus became great friends, and ended up forming the renowned Inklings.<sup>78</sup> Tolkien had such a decisive influence on Lewis's conversion to Christianity that Pearce has gone so far as to suggest that 'without J.R.R. Tolkien there might not have been C.S. Lewis, at least not the C.S. Lewis that has come to be known and loved throughout the world as the formidable Christian apologist....'<sup>79</sup>

What Tolkien, along with Hugo Dyson, did for Lewis, was to explain that Christianity had many of the characteristics of other myths, only it was a true myth. Christianity was a myth that entered the actual world; it entered history.<sup>80</sup> As Tolkien elegantly wrote:

The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories. They contain many marvels—peculiarly artistic, beautiful, and moving: 'mythical' in their perfect, self-contained significance; and among the marvels is the greatest and most complete conceivable eucatastrophe. But this story has entered History and the primary world; the desire and aspi-

---

71 Tolkien, 'On Fairy', p. 144.

72 Tolkien, 'On Fairy', p. 153.

73 Tolkien, 'On Fairy', p. 153.

74 Tolkien, 'On Fairy', p. 153.

75 Birzer, *J.R.R.*, pp. 7-8; Walter Hooper, 'The Other Oxford Movement: Tolkien and the Inklings', in *Tolkien*, ed. Pearce, p. 185; Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 57; and Pearce, 'True', pp. 87-88.

---

76 Birzer, *J.R.R.*, p. 89.

77 Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 55.

78 Pearce, *Tolkien*, pp. 55 and 64.

79 Pearce, 'True', p. 88.

80 Pearce, 'True', p. 88; and Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 58.

ration of sub-creation has been raised to the fulfilment [sic] of Creation. The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation....It has the pre-eminently 'inner consistency of reality'. There is no tale ever told that men would rather find was true, and none which so many sceptical men have accepted as true on its own merits....To reject it leads to either sadness or wrath.<sup>81</sup>

What Tolkien did is show how non-Christian mythology was merely 'God expressing Himself through the minds of poets, using images of their "mythopoeia" to reveal fragments of His eternal truth'.<sup>82</sup> What was most incredible was that he held the same was true for Christianity, with the exception that the poet in this instance was God, and God used as images real individuals and real history.<sup>83</sup> To say that this discussion had a profound effect upon Lewis is to understate the magnitude, for it transformed Lewis's life from a relatively new theist (having been an atheist for a long time) to a Christian.

As for Tolkien's own mythology, namely as found in *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, many critics have ignored his Christian faith when discussing these works.<sup>84</sup> While it is true that these works are less overtly Christian than Lewis's *Narnia* series, they could have

originated only in a Christian imagination.<sup>85</sup> Tolkien's faith was central to his myth, unconsciously so at the outset, but conscious in the revisions, as he conceded to a close friend.<sup>86</sup> Colin Gunton holds that, '...Tolkien's depiction of the war of good against evil has too many interesting parallels with the biblical story of Christ's victory on the cross to be ignored'.<sup>87</sup> The origins of the myth lie in a multitude of influences, from Homer, to the Norse sagas, to the Old and New Testaments.<sup>88</sup> Duriez comments that 'Tolkien's world in general is replete with Christian heroes and yet it is a pagan world'.<sup>89</sup> One important aspect of the novels is their strong sense of absolute moral values, which transcend time and culture.<sup>90</sup> While there is no unambiguous 'religion' in the narratives themselves, they are 'inherently a biblical universe'.<sup>91</sup>

## The Christianity of Middle Earth

*The Lord of the Rings* has had a profound impact on many lives. Stephen

---

<sup>81</sup> Tolkien, 'On Fairy', pp. 155-156.

<sup>82</sup> Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 59.

<sup>83</sup> Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 59.

<sup>84</sup> Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 102.

---

<sup>85</sup> Stratford Caldecott, 'The Reflection of Christian Truth in the Mythopoetic Imagination of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien', *Epiphany Journal* 14, no. 4 (1994), p. 80.

<sup>86</sup> Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 103.

<sup>87</sup> Colin Gunton, 'A Far-Off Gleam of the Gospel: Salvation in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*', in *Tolkien*, ed. Pearce, p. 133. See also p. 130.

<sup>88</sup> Blumberg, 'Literary', p. 53.

<sup>89</sup> Duriez, 'Theology', p. 48.

<sup>90</sup> John G. West, Jr., preface to *Celebrating*, ed. West, p. 10.

<sup>91</sup> Blumberg, 'Literary', p. 76.

Lawhead recounts that in its pages, he saw 'the visible trail of God's passing, the hallowed glow of his lingering presence'.<sup>92</sup> Bradley Birzer sees a parallel between Augustine and Tolkien in that, 'Much as St. Augustine had, Tolkien confronted a world and culture that seemed to many on the verge of collapse. And, as with St. Augustine, Tolkien hoped that his myth would serve as...a return to right reason.'<sup>93</sup>

*The Hobbit* originated as a story for his children, but, after he shared the text with his friends at the Inklings, they, primarily Lewis, encouraged him to publish the story as a book.<sup>94</sup> *The Silmarillion*, Tolkien's jewel among texts, began in the trenches of World War I, and possibly some parts earlier. It is Tolkien's creation story, containing numerous parallels to Gen. In *The Silmarillion*, 'The creation looks forward to an end.'<sup>95</sup> Saturated with hints that God is in control of all that goes on in the wide world, we see that even evil can be transformed into good by the Lord, as Kreeft observes, 'Divine providence is like a French chef, using spices from decayed organisms to make good food even better.'<sup>96</sup>

The fall of Satan is depicted in Tolkien's narrative, as well as other biblical motifs. Pearce takes note:

The allegory becomes even less

mistakable when Tolkien describes the war between Melkor and Manwë, who is clearly cast in the role of the archangel Michael....The parallels between Melkor and Lucifer are made even more apparent when Tolkien explains that the name, Melkor, means 'He who arises in Might'— 'But...they name him Morgoth, the Dark Enemy of the World.' Similarly, Lucifer, brightest of all the angels, means 'Light Bringer,' whereas Satan, like Morgoth, means 'Enemy.' Tolkien's intention, both as a Christian and as a philologist, in identifying Melkor with Lucifer is plain enough.<sup>97</sup>

Creation, for Tolkien, began like the uttered word, through music; just as Genesis depicts God creating via speaking, in *The Silmarillion* creation takes place as the music unfolds. As we read: 'Never since have the Ainur made any music like to this music, though it has been said that a greater still shall be made before Ilúvatar by the choirs of the Ainur and the Children of Ilúvatar after the end of days. Then the themes of Ilúvatar shall be played aright, and take Being in the moment of utterance, for all shall then understand fully his intent in their part....'<sup>98</sup> Later in the narrative we see Melkor's fall, but also how even this ill turn of events will simply become a part of Ilúvatar's great masterpiece:

Then Ilúvatar spoke, and he said: 'Mighty are the Ainur, and mighti-

---

92 Stephen R. Lawhead, 'J.R.R. Tolkien: Master of Middle-Earth', in *Tolkien*, ed. Pearce, p. 165.

93 Birzer, *J.R.R.*, p. 67.

94 Richard Jeffery, 'Root and Tree: The Growth of Tolkien's Writings', in *Tolkien*, ed. Pearce, p. 148; and Pearce, *Tolkien*, pp. 65-66.

95 Gunton, 'Far', p. 136.

96 Kreeft, 'Wartime', p. 43.

---

97 Pearce, 'True', p. 90.

98 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1977), p. 4.

est among them is Melkor; but that he may know, and all the Ainur, that I am Ilúvatar, those things that ye have sung, I will show them forth, that ye may see what ye have done. And thou, Melkor, shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined.<sup>99</sup>

If *The Silmarillion* is Tolkien's masterpiece, his jewel among texts, then the story of Beren and Lúthien is his jewel among jewels. As Caldecott explains, '...Beren and Lúthien, [are] at the very core of the mythological system of which *The Lord of the Rings* is merely a fragment....'<sup>100</sup> This tale is a romantic adventure from start to finish. As in Song, it may mirror the divine pursuit of our soul. Lúthien 'follows after Beren in much the same way as the divine assistance which comes to us at crucial moments in our own individual Quests'.<sup>101</sup>

*The Silmarillion* is not Tolkien's only narrative with Christian parallels. *The Lord of the Rings* is saturated with hints of Jesus. As Pearce mentions, 'though Tolkien makes never so much as a glancing reference to Jesus Christ in a single paragraph of all *The Lord of the Rings*' thick volumes, His face is glimpsed on virtually every page....subconsciously he was so saturated with the Christian concept of

reality that it permeates his myth profoundly.<sup>102</sup> In many different ways, scholars have noted how Frodo, Gandalf, and Aragorn are Christ-figures.<sup>103</sup> To their number, Samwise Gamgee may be added as well.

Gandalf may be seen as a Christ-figure in that he sacrifices his life to save his companions.<sup>104</sup> He is later 'resurrected,' returning from the dead, clothed in white, having undergone a powerful transformation.<sup>105</sup> Aragorn is a Christ-figure, in that he too descends to the realm of the dead, and returns. Furthermore, Aragorn is the rightful heir to the throne of Middle-Earth, as Jesus is the rightful heir to the throne of the Davidic kingdom, although both are humble in appearance. Frodo as a Christ-figure may be seen in the burden he must bear on behalf of all Middle-Earth, carrying his 'cross', the ring bound for destruction. Finally, Sam may be seen in this role, when he has to bear Frodo's burden, and both descend into Mordor, which is analogous to the realm of the dead.

While Tolkien's works may not be blatantly theological, they deal with the Christian message of salvation, broadly understood.<sup>106</sup> The message is that happiness is not to be found in this world, but in the world to come in eter-

99 Tolkien, *Silmarillion*, p. 6.

100 Caldecott, 'Over', pp. 22-23.

101 Caldecott, 'Over', p. 25.

102 Pearce, *Tolkien*, pp. 82 and 94.

103 Sheridan Gilley, 'Christianity and Fantasy in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*', *The Modern Churchman* 25, no. 1 (1982), p. 51; and Kreeft, 'Wartime,' p. 45.

104 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part I: The Fellowship of the Ring* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), p. 430.

105 Tolkien, *Two*, pp. 151 and 241.

106 Gunton, 'Far', p. 125.

nity.<sup>107</sup> In a letter Tolkien once wrote:

If you do not believe in a personal God the question: 'What is the purpose of life?' is unaskable and unanswerable....So it may be said that the chief purpose of life, for any one of us, is to increase according to our capacity our knowledge of God by all the means we have, and to be moved by it to praise and thanks....We praise you, we call you holy, we worship you, we proclaim your glory, we thank you for the greatness of your splendour.<sup>108</sup>

The true saviour of Middle-Earth is this One God, 'who works through love and freedom of his creatures...using even our mistakes and the designs of the Enemy...to bring about our good'.<sup>109</sup> At root, *The Lord of the Rings* is a 'mystical Passion Play', where the bearing of the ring, which represents sin, reminds us of the crosses we must carry; 'The mythological Quest is a veritable Via Dolorosa'.<sup>110</sup> Within his narratives we find a vivid depiction of the results of the fall, as well as its reversal.<sup>111</sup>

## Conclusion

We owe a debt to Tolkien, for his stories, for Lewis, and for his incredible witness to Christ. He is a model of a Christian for our times. We may deservedly call him, 'a poet of the Kingdom'.<sup>112</sup> In fact, as Birzer points out, Tolkien 'reached far more people with his Middle-earth mythology than did any of the other Christian humanist thinkers, including Lewis. Outside of the scriptural authors, he may be the most widely read Christian author of our time'.<sup>113</sup> In 1973, at the age of 81, J.R.R. Tolkien left this life for the next. He was buried with his wife, below a tombstone which reads: 'Edith Mary Tolkien, Lúthien, 1889-1971. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, Beren, 1892-1973'.<sup>114</sup> Let us imitate Tolkien by being Christ's faithful witness to our family, our friends, and our colleagues. In such a way we may honour Tolkien, who, like the man in his parable, has built for us a tower, from the top of which we may 'look out upon the sea'.

---

**107** Kevin Aldrich, 'The Sense of Time in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*', in *Tolkien*, ed. Pearce, p. 100.

**108** Tolkien, *Letters*, p. 400.

**109** Caldecott, 'Over', p. 32.

**110** Pearce, 'True', pp. 92-93.

**111** Gunton, 'Far', p. 137.

---

**112** Robert Murray, 'J.R.R. Tolkien and the Art of the Parable', in *Tolkien*, ed. Pearce, p. 50.

**113** Birzer, *J.R.R.*, p. 136.

**114** Pearce, *Tolkien*, p. 207.

---

# The message and messenger of the Gospel

Victor B. Cole

**KEYWORDS:** *Gospel, evangelism, reconciliation, stewardship, truth, social responsibility, integrity*

## Introduction

We believe the church is the community of God's redeemed people who have a definite purpose and mission. The true church is called out of the world; it is in the world but not of the world. All those who are being redeemed and are so called out have a defined identity in Christ (i.e., who we are) and a well defined purpose in the world (i.e., what we do). We do well to remind ourselves from time to time about these matters of first principle. To borrow from a famous expression of Dr Bill Bright, these matters are 'so simple, we fall over their simplicity' at times. Hence we must remind ourselves according to the biblical injunction—'line upon line, precept upon precept'.

This biblical reflection draws from aspects of two articles of the historic Lausanne Covenant—clause 4 on 'the nature of evangelism' and clause 6 on

'the church and evangelism'. These form the topic of this reflection on 2 Corinthians 4:1-12, and 5:11-15.

The church, the redeemed people of God, has a charge, a trust or a message. It has to do with the task of reconciling a lost humanity to God. All those who are redeemed by grace have been given this charge. Our reflection centres upon some aspects of the nature and purpose of the church in relation to this task.

So come with me to reflect on what the Holy Spirit tells us through Paul the apostle about all the people of God who are messengers or ministers of the Good News, the Evangel.

## The manner of the messenger (2 Cor. 4:1-4)

Three things characterise those who are called to carry the message of reconciliation. The messenger of this Good News realizes that the message is a stewardship. In 1 Timothy 1:4 Paul referred to 'God's work' (NIV) or 'God's plan' or 'God's administration'

---

*Dr Victor Cole is Professor of Educational Studies at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST), Kenya, holding degrees from Dallas Theological Seminary (ThM) and Michigan State University (PhD). Dr Cole is the author of a number of publications in journal articles and books on theological education including Training of the Ministry (Theological Book Trust, Bangalore, 2001) and Innovations in African Theological Education (forthcoming). This Bible study, which is edited for publication and used by permission, was delivered at the 2004 Forum on World Evangelization sponsored by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization at Thailand in October 2004.*

(NAS) (*oikonomia*).

Here in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, that same concept of *oikonomia* implies a stewardship. A stewardship is a trust, and this particular trust is given by grace to the unworthy. Listen to Paul in 1 Timothy 1:12-14: 'I thank Christ Jesus our Lord . . . that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.'

All those who would proclaim this Good News must constantly remember that they hold this ministry in trust from God. We must remember from time to time whence God has brought us. Paul did not lose sight of how much the grace of God was at work in him—a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent or injurious man. He said, 'I was shown mercy'—or to put it literally, he said 'God *merced* me.' So then he who is forgiven much loves much!

But a steward must be prepared sooner or later to give account to the Master of the house. This must be a constant reminder that we hold in trust this glorious ministry or reconciliation. It is in the manner of the messenger of the Good News to realize he/she has a stewardship.

It is also true that the messenger renounces 'secret and shameful ways' (2 Cor. 4:2a) This pertains to the conduct of the messenger—both in private and public life. It concerns the need for personal authenticity of the messenger of the Good News, because, if care is not taken, the messenger's lifestyle may 'speak' against the words of proclamation. The relevant clause (No. 6) of the Lausanne covenant stipulates 'the lack of living faith' is a 'stumbling

block to evangelism'.

Thus the manner of the messengers of the Good News involves authentic lifestyle which does not collide with or undermine the word of proclamation—whether in public or in secret places. Messengers of the Good News are to realize that they have a stewardship, that they renounce secret and shameful ways.

The messenger renounces deceptions and distortions: ' . . . we do not use deception, nor do we distort the Word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the Spirit of God' (2 Cor. 4:2).

In our attempt to win the lost we must not sugar-coat the message to make it palatable and then distort it in the process. We must not play God's love off against God's justice. Hell is a reality—not a myth; people are lost in sin and are hell bound—unpalatable as these old fashioned truths may be!

The authentic messenger of this glorious Good News must 'set forth' (v 2b) the truth plainly—that is, put the truth in full view, for all to see. In 1 Timothy 4:6 Paul used similar expressions, namely the truth is to be laid before the hearers as a waiter places a meal before guests or as a merchant displays his wares before customers. The point is to convey the gospel message in plain language, undistorted before all people. As the faithful steward or messenger does this, consciences will be pierced and pricked. The truth will disturb those who sit in comfort but it will comfort those who are disturbed!

If the truth of the gospel appears veiled after plainly setting it forth (or making it clear) this should be no sur-

prise in light of the machinations of Satan. Paul says in verses 3-4 that Satan blindfolds people 'so that they cannot see the light of the gospel' and thus they follow the path of self deception.

There is the story of a person who claimed to be a 'Christian' but was not saved! When challenged to make a decision leading to salvation, he said, 'My time has not yet come!' When asked when the time might come, then replied, 'I don't know'. Do you see a form of deception?

Now consider a scenario where it is the so-called 'messenger' who deliberately distorts the Good News in an attempt to appear 'presentable', 'fashionable', 'open-minded', 'sensitive', 'accommodating', 'tolerant', and so on. One highly placed church leader a bishop who was once a theology professor who used to caution his students not to call people to be 'saved'. He said that was a 'dangerous game' Instead he taught that all people are saved already, and what the messengers ought to do is just to go to tell them this. Do you see the deception of the 'god of this age'?

But it is in the manner of the authentic messenger of the gospel to realise that it is a stewardship, that it is necessary to renounce secret and shameful ways and to renounce deception and distortions. So now can move to the next point.

### The message of the messenger (2 Cor. 4:5, 6)

Note these words in 2 Corinthians 4:5-6

For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves

as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

What is the essence of this glorious Good News? Many would-be messengers of Christ are distorting the message, deliberately or otherwise. The apostolic teaching, handed down once for all—that old fashioned message—remains unchanged, whatever happens. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.

Some would-be messengers tell us Paul has gone beyond Jesus' intentions. They tell us that the 'good news' of Jesus was proclamation to the (materially) poor, those incarcerated in dungeons, the (physically) blind and the socially materially and politically oppressed. They are referring to our Lord's words in Luke 4:18: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed ...'

Yes, Jesus certainly went about doing good on earth—he fed the hungry, he healed the sick, he comforted the sorrowing, he defended the cause of the weak and the disadvantaged. But these acts of compassion which are so necessary and vital are not the

reasons why he died. The gospel of Christ must be accompanied by acts of compassionate service but the two must not be confused. The Lausanne clause No. 6 says, '(I)n the Church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary'.

Part of our 'Christian presence in the world' (as hinted in Clause 4) is also amplified in the Manila Manifesto under the rubric, 'The gospel and social responsibility.' It says, 'As we proclaim the love of God we must be involved in loving service, as we preach the Kingdom of God we must be committed to the demands of justice and peace. ... Jesus not only proclaimed the kingdom of God, he also demonstrated its arrival by works of mercy and power.'

Evangelism must not be confused with social responsibility, even though the two must go hand in hand. In 2 Corinthians 4:5-6, Paul says we proclaim 'Jesus Christ as Lord' (*Kyrios Christos*) Again, see Philipians 2:10-11:

... that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

How then is the messenger related to the message? While the two are integrally related, they must not be confused. The unassailable message is Jesus Christ—*Kyrios Christos*. Reference is made to 'ourselves' as servants. The messenger is not the message. The Lausanne Covenant # 6 says, 'The church is the community of God's people rather than an institution, and must not be identified with any partic-

ular culture, social or political system, or human ideology.' Just as a messenger is not the message, the church is not what we preach.

When a would-be messenger spends time talking about self or his/her denomination or group, here is already a deviation. But when a messenger talks about Jesus Christ the Lord, he/she cannot go wrong. So when your hearers raise objections, just talk about Jesus! When they point out faults, just talk about Jesus! When doubts are raised, talk about Jesus!

The reference by Paul to 'minister' is not a synonym for a special class of 'clergy' or 'full time workers' or the like. All who have experienced Christ the light, those who have been transformed out of darkness into the light, qualify as 'messengers'. The Lausanne Covenant No. 6 says, 'World evangelization requires the whole Church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world.'

### The Measure of the minister (2 Cor. 4:7)

We have reflected on the manner of the messenger and the message, so now we can turn to the measure of the messenger. Notice these words: 'But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us' (2 Cor. 4:7).

This is the true measure of an authentic messenger—one who has experienced the 'inner light' or transformation from inside out. Inner transformation is the basic starting point. If this is missing the messenger fails to measure up.

That inner transformation links the

one so transformed to the divine glory. The transformation process begins and continues by degrees from glory to glory.

This is what 2 Corinthians 3:18 says:

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Another measure of an authentic messenger of the glorious Good News is a constant realization of fragility—'But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us' (2 Cor. 4:7).

The analogy of the clay pot underscores the fragile constitution of the human messenger. God knows this and yet chose by grace to have his 'all-surpassing power' manifest through jars of clay. This is amazing! But that is how our God works. God makes perfect his strength in our feeble human weakness. This is to keep us humble. We must remember always that is not 'ourselves', but God who is at work in and through us. The moment a 'jar of clay' attempts to take the glory that belongs to God Almighty, it is shattered into a thousand and one pieces. The Lord says, 'My glory I will not share with man' (Isa. 42:8). 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble' (James 4:6). God surely does battle with the proud and shatters to pieces the pretentious 'clay pot'.

There are a number of ways that shattering of such clay pots occur—it could be through loss of credibility and the once effective cutting edge. It could

be the severe blunting of ministry effectiveness due to erosion of personal authenticity. It could be a setting aside of such a 'utensil' due to the weight of sin, and so on.

A measure of an authentic messenger is to be found in the realization and a heeding of the warning that 'he who thinks he stands should take heed lest he falls' (1 Cor. 10:12). But 'I am what I am, by the grace of God' (1 Cor. 15:10). So, if right now you are doing some marvellous service for God, remember—it is God at work in you—clay pot. 'We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the all-surpassing power is from God and not from us' (2 Cor 4:7). The authentic messenger of the gospel must constantly realize his/her own fragility. The fragility is in part due to the perils dotted along the pathway of the ministry. It is also inherent in our humanness.

A third measure of an authentic measure of the gospel is a stubborn faith (2 Cor. 4:8) Faith and hope are intertwined in this passage. See 2 Corinthians 4:8-9. 'We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.'

This is a catalogue of hardships and adversary, which will confront the authentic messenger of the Good News. The hardships are a measure of the quality of the messenger. The hardships cater for inner strengths and inner spirit, even though buffeting continues on the outside. All of these are placed in the context of the fragility of the 'jars of clay'. Although weak and fragile, pummelled from all sides, yet they never give up and are never defeated.

Does this not fly in the face of today's 'prosperity gossellers'? They measure success by worldly standards and outward appearance. They fail to see that the Lord of the ministry himself was a 'man of sorrows, acquainted with grief' (Is. 53:3). The Son of Man who had 'nowhere to lay his head' (Mt. 8:20). Clause 6 of the Lausanne Covenant points out that 'a church which preaches the cross must itself be marked by the cross.' Clause 4 tell us that 'in issuing the gospel invitation, we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship'. We are called not only to believe on him but to suffer from him (Philp. 1:29-30).

There is a sharp difference between a church that rests at ease and the suffering church. We must take comfort in the fact that 'we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that his all surpassing power is from God and not from us' (2 Cor. 4:7).

We have reflected on the manner of the messenger of this glorious gospel, the message and on the measure of the minister. We now conclude by looking at another aspect of our topic.

### The motivation of the messenger (2 Cor. 5:11, 14, 15)

Two essential motivators are mentioned in chapter 5. The first is the 'fear of the Lord'—see verse 11: 'Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men.' The Authorised Version renders the phrase, 'the terror of the Lord'. This concerns the stark reality of an impending judgement, whether it is fashionable to preach or not. This same

matter is alluded to in the previous verse as well: 'for we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ....' This is in reference to believers' appearing at the '*bema*' or judgement seat of Christ. But there is also the coming judgement of the wicked who miss the grace of God in salvation. This fear ought to motivate the authentic ministers of the gospel to seek to persuade people to repent—to turn from sin and self to the living God.

This is apostolic preaching—whether it is palatable or not. So an authentic messenger of this glorious Good News should cultivate the art of persuasion. It will involve pleas, warnings, even tears! Nothing is to be spared in order to persuade the lost to turn to God.

There is a story of a prisoner in England to whom the Good News was proclaimed many years ago. After the message was clearly laid out, and having understood it, the prisoner turned to the messenger and asked, 'Do you really believe what you've just shared with me?' The reply was 'Of course I do, and that is why I have come to share the Good News with you!' Whereupon the prisoner responded, saying, 'If what you have shared with me is true, I will not hesitate to crawl over broken glass all over this country to make it known!'

That man understood the gravity of the matter. He realized that no sacrifice would be too great to make the message known to a dying world. The dire consequences, the gravity of eternity without Christ, should motivate all genuine messengers of God to plead with the dying world of the need to avoid the 'terror of the Lord'—on that day when 'every knee shall bow and

every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord' (Phil. 2:11).

The Lausanne Covenant clause No. 4 acknowledges the vital need for 'persuading people to come to him personally and so to be reconciled to God'. We must never lose sight of this element in the task of evangelization—no matter how unpopular it might become.

But there is another motivator! It is the love of Christ—'for Christ's love compels us' (2 Cor. 5:14). We know the famous text: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son ...' (Jn. 3:16)—he gave the one and only, that is, everything!

This love has implications. First, it compels us to tell others about it, and then it compels us to give ourselves to others in the service of God. Finally, it induces us to love others too — 'we love because he first loved us' (1 John 5:19).

This then is the punch line—if I understand the depth and ramifications of God's love for me, I will no longer live to self—'And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again' (2 Cor. 5:15). I now become an eternal debtor to him who loved me enough to die for me.

In mid-2004, there came to California an old Vietnamese sailor who many years before had risked his career to save some boat people. They were at sea trying to escape to freedom but, as is often the case, turbulence soon changed the course of events. The sailors decided to force the refugees overboard to their death. But this captain refused to go along with the idea. Lives were saved physically, but this man paid the price—he lost his job! It

is now more than twenty years later. The survivors had gone on to settle in the United States to restart their lives. They knew of this man's whereabouts so they arranged a reunion. The Vietnamese captain was flown to California to meet once again the people whose lives he had saved. As I saw this reported on television, I will not forget one of the survivors, a gentleman who ran to meet the old sailor—overcome by emotion, he hugged him and said with tears streaming down his cheek, 'I owe my life to you!'

This is on the natural, physical and mundane level—but it pales into insignificance in comparison with the eternal ramifications of our subject here. If we as the redeemed messengers realize we are no longer our own masters, then the love of Christ will be a strong motivator to seek by all means to persuade the lost and the dying. We must take caution, though, not to play 'the terror of the Lord' against the love of God. God's love stands side by side with God's judgement—both truths must be held together.

## Conclusion

It is a privilege to serve the Lord in whatever life vocation he has called us, and according to the spiritual gifts with which he had endowed everyone of us. It is required that we be found faithful. May the Lord of the ministry renew our vision, our heart and our calling.

## Books Reviewed

Reviewed by Max Davidson  
Stephen Davis (editor)  
*Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*

Reviewed by David Parker  
D. G. Hart  
*Deconstructing Evangelicalism: Conservative Protestantism in the Age of Billy Graham*

Reviewed by H. H. Drake Williams, III  
Peter Jensen  
*At the Heart of the Universe: What Christians Believe*

Reviewed by David Parker  
Donald G. Bloesch  
*The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission*

## Book Reviews

ERT (2005) 29:2, 185-187

### Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy

Edited by Stephen Davis

2nd edition

Louisville, KY: Westminster John

Knox Press, 2001 (2nd ed.)

ISBN 0-664-22251-X

Pb pp. 220 + xiii

*Reviewed by Max Davidson, Morling College, Sydney.*

There are many books discussing the presence of evil in a world created by a wholly good and all-powerful God. What makes this one particularly interesting is the way in which it involves active debate among the five main contributors. This helps the reader engage in the criticism and defence of the various perspectives.

Stephen Davis defines theism broadly as the belief that there is one omnipotent, personal and perfectly good God who cre-

ated the world. The book's sub-title, *Live Options in Theodicy*, suggests that the book is concerned with attempts to show that God is righteous, despite the presence of evil, but that more than one approach is to be expected. In format, there are five major sections. In each, one writer presents his contribution, the other four writers respond by turn, and finally, the main writer of that section is able to respond to the critiques that have been made.

However, despite Davis's definition of theism in the introduction, not all of the contributors to this book actually accept this framework. One thing that emerges is the fact that what a person says about evil is dependent on their view of the nature of God. Both Davis and John Hick work from the concept of theism outlined above to develop their theodicies.

However, John Roth rejects God's pure goodness, while David Griffin holds to a process theology, rejecting God's omnipotence. D. J. Phillips, by contrast, refuses

to accept the possibility of a theodicy at all. His chapter is entitled, 'Theism without Theodicy.'

The main authors are all associated with the Claremont group of colleges in California. With only one change, the key contributors to this second edition are the same as the group that produced the first, twenty years earlier. The rationale for a second edition was that the authors consider that their views, while essentially the same as expressed in the earlier edition, have nevertheless developed in the intervening period. Occasionally such changes are noted and make interesting reading.

Roth writes of the enormous amount of evil in the world, calling his chapter, 'A Theodicy of Protest'. Rather than defend God's righteousness, Roth cries out in protest against the God whose world is filled with so much gratuitous evil. In the face of evil, Roth affirms God's omnipotence, but rejects the proposition that God is wholly good. His hope is that somehow human protest might lead to change in a God who has a demonic side. Bible believing Christians will judge that Roth has paid too great a price to solve the problem of evil.

Hick begins by rejecting the idea of humanity's fall, claiming that the evolutionary development of the human race holds the key to theodicy. Humans did not begin in a state of perfection. Rather, moral virtues are acquired through life's struggles, though Hick postulates some sort of future existence to complete the person-making not fully realized in this life. He thinks of God as a 'limitlessly good and limitlessly powerful being'. However, it is fair criticism that in Hick's view, God is neither personal nor Christian. Denial of humanity's fall, of course, flies in the face of clear biblical teaching.

Davis writes from an evangelical perspective, and presents a free will defence, arguing that God's goodness and omnipotence can be shown to be logically compatible with the existence of evil in the world. Humans are able to make moral choices, and wrong choices lie behind moral evil. Regarding natural evils such as earthquakes, Davis claims that at least sometimes people can move towards maturity in the face of hardship and pain arising from such occurrences, though he does not argue that the world in which we live is the best of all possible worlds. Rather, he proposes that there is an acceptable moral basis for the fact that God allows such evil in the world. In addition to the growth that comes to some people, in the end, all evil will be finally and fully overcome. Davis develops his theodicy without surrendering any of theism's fundamental beliefs. Bible-believing Christians will find this theodicy to be based on presuppositions close to their own. He claims his theodicy is demonstrably plausible and coherent. At the same time, the other writers raise thought-provoking criticisms of Davis's position.

Griffin rejects the idea of God's omnipotence, as he discusses theodicy from a process theology perspective. In this framework, God is said to have created the world out of pre-existing and resistant chaos, which continues to resist the all-good divine will. Thus, there is no way that evil can be attributed to God, who works in the world by persuasion rather than control. Such an approach to the problem of evil is no longer confronted by the need for a theodicy. The existence of evil does not stand in conflict with the goodness of God. One author in response sees this as a case of 'God on a leash'. And as Davis points out, omnipotence is 'essential to Christianity' as traditionally

understood, so that Griffin is no longer speaking about the same faith as the other authors.

Finally, D.Z. Phillips argues that theism does not necessarily entail theodicy. The existence of evil in the world does not have to be explained, despite the fact that Phillips affirms the total goodness and power of God. He argues for theism without theodicy. In his view, creation is not 'an assertion of power, but...a withdrawal' in which 'Perfection allows something other than itself to exist', though it is not appropriate to attribute purpose and to say that the creation is 'for' something. Life itself is a gift and should be accepted that way, says Phillips. There ought not to be calculations to determine whether the good in life outweighs the bad. The person experiencing suffering can face it by realizing that God in love also suffers. Suffering is part of life.

Some of Phillips's critics complain that they find him hard to understand. Indeed, whether he actually believes in the reality of God, as distinct from God's 'existence' only in human language, is even questioned. His position will hardly satisfy a Bible-believing Christian, who accepts that the world and people are here for divinely defined purposes, and that there is an eschatological future in which all wrong will be righted and evil eliminated by the all-good and all-powerful God.

The book concludes with a discussion from John Cobb of some pastoral implications of the various views on theodicy, and two other postscripts from Marilyn McCord Adams and Frederick Sontag (who was a main contributor in the first edition).

The value of this book lies in the engaging way the various authors debate with each other as they present a series of diverse and contrasting statements on theodicy. The problem of evil in the world

is 'the most serious problem' faced by theism, according to Davis. This is a serious and thought-provoking volume. It is not for everyone, but academics, pastors concerned to think things through before feeding their people, and theological students will find good reward in its close study.

ERT (2005) 29:2, 187-189

### Deconstructing Evangelicalism: Conservative Protestantism in the Age of Billy Graham

by D. G. Hart

(Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004)

ISBN 0-8010-2728-4

Hb pp224 Indexes

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

This provocative book suggests that the term 'evangelicalism' (and the idea behind it) should be abandoned because it does not really exist except as an artificial construction of its pioneers, such as Carl Henry, Harold Ockenga and Billy Graham, and their supporters. Although many of the author's insights about the causes of weakness in the movement (as identified, for example, by Mark Noll and David Wells) are worth serious consideration, his overall case needs some of his own 'deconstruction'.

Hart contends that in earlier times (up to the end of the 19th cent) the term 'evangelicalism' was applied to mainstream Protestantism, especially in the revivalistic aspect which had come to dominate in preceding generations. But in the World War 2 period and following, it was deliberately used in a new and different way. He says the 'Evangelicals commanded Evangelicalism' and made it refer to a new movement which would steer conservative Christians away from negative and

polemic fundamentalism on the one hand, and from liberal Protestantism as represented in the National Council of Churches on the other. This new evangelicalism was intended to be a cohesive movement, complete with its own infrastructure and constituting itself as the norm of orthodox Protestantism. It was essentially a parachurch movement, a coalition of groups lead by stellar figures who would in time become highly popular, and its goal was 'united evangelical action'. The rise of right wing politics in the US from the 1980s provided conditions in which this edifice gathered a great deal of visibility and power through its numerical strength.

This popularity and especially the success evangelicals have had with youth and their skill in using music, technology and other forms of modern culture to their advantage have led to a further problem—'evangelical schizophrenia' in which the party of 'traditional values' and 'external, definable and transcendent authority' is also the group which has been most successful at 'packaging those truths in forms [such as 'Jesus Rock' and 'contemporary Christian worship'] that are singularly disposable'. It is, Hart argues, a serious question of 'identity' and 'coherence'—'how born-again Protestants can be politically and culturally conservative and liturgically liberal', and so is 'another stick of dynamite in the deconstruction of evangelicalism'.

If Henry, Ockenga and others were the 'general contractors' who constructed this movement, according to Hart there were also 'subcontractors' in the form of religious historians (such as G. Marsden and M. Noll), social scientists (J.D. Hunter, C. Smith) and religious pollsters (G. Gallup Jr., G. Barna) who supported it; 'they applied the religious categories developed by neo-evangelicals to answer

the questions their academic peers were asking about Protestantism in the United States.' Without them, the movement would 'have frayed and therefore failed much quicker than it did'.

However, Hart argues that the original aims for the movement could not be fulfilled (and in fact were not even feasible or even desirable) because its parachurch nature and the motives for its creation meant that it lacked 'an institutional centre, intellectual coherence, and devotional direction'. What is more, there was no possibility of developing these (despite the calls for theological and intellectual content from people like David Wells and Mark Noll). These functions could be supplied only by a church, which is where evangelicals themselves in fact receive the nurture and opportunities for worship that their evangelical groups cannot supply. Evangelicalism therefore was incapable of carrying the weight expected of it, so its current weaknesses are not surprising.

So on Hart's view, this 'making' and 'unmaking' of evangelicalism shows that the term should be abandoned, not only because it is hollow and does not in fact exist, but more importantly because it is damaging to historical Christianity. The church is the locus of the full-orbed Christian tradition, but this has been obscured in the United States by the success of the evangelical movement in attracting the attention of scholars and the public. Yet, despite its claim to be the orthodox version of Protestantism, it lacks church polity, creed and liturgy, and instead has been able to offer only minimalist beliefs, action oriented programmes and a focus on personal (or 'feudal') loyalties.

This book is aimed at evangelical practitioners and leaders, but also at the scholar, the media and public figures, who

according to the author, would be better off turning aside from the 'evangelicals' and studying the churches more intently!

Hart has a personal stake in this—in fact, he calls himself a 'victim in recovery'—and as a Reformed Christian, he does not want to be identified with Evangelicalism anymore, despite his considerable involvement in the past (e.g., he was formerly Director of Wheaton College's Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals—ISAE). He believes that the churches have much more to offer than the 'prefabricated schemes of low church (revivalistic) Protestantism' which is evangelicalism. Yet with the rapid onset of an era of post-denominationalism, this is a critique that needs to be much more carefully drawn. For example, the nature and role of the local church and the relationship between the local church and the central denominational organisation are in transition and the old notions of a highly directive denominational hierarchy controlling the local church is not likely to be the norm for much longer.

The focus of this book is exclusively the United States, but, whatever the particular characteristics of the movement in that country, a wider view that took in other parts of the western world and especially looked beyond to the developing countries, would have produced a much more balanced and realistic analysis of what is a global movement of churches and denominations as well as parachurch organisations. These often embody the core values of biblical Christianity in a positive fashion. But even where evangelicalism does exist more obviously as a parachurch movement, it has demonstrated that it has a useful role to play in focusing on particular tasks that are not so appropriate for the church. Even in the west, however,

evangelicalism exists in many instances as a welcome renewal movement within the church.

So Hart's main problem is that he begs the basic question: the nature of evangelicalism. By making the assumptions that he does in constructing his own perspective, he invites those who have different views to attempt their own deconstruction of his edifice.

ERT (2005) 29:2, 189-190

### At the Heart of the Universe: What Christians Believe

Peter Jensen

Downers Grove/ Leicester: IVP, 1991  
ISBN 0-85111-293-5  
176 pp. Paper

*Reviewed by H. H. Drake Williams, III  
Ph.D., Central Schwenkfelder Church,  
North Wales, PA USA*

Peter Jensen's volume, *At the Heart of the Universe*, is a book about Christian beliefs. It is a published form of the Moore Theological College Annual Lectures that he delivered in August 1990. It is a well-written book that is accessible to laity.

His purpose for writing is to explain Christian doctrine. For Jensen, Christian doctrine needs explanation in our day, and its importance and usefulness needs to become more apparent to all Christians. He believes that doctrine has a poor name, even among Christians. It is regarded as boring, divisive, and irrelevant. Such a belief about Christian doctrine impoverishes the church and hinders its witness to the world.

His approach to making Christian doctrine engaging is an intriguing one. Rather than starting at the nature of revelation, and then proceeding to last things, Jensen changes the order. He

begins by talking about last things first. For Jensen, this provides the indispensable context for thinking about the Christian life. By talking about last things first, he finds greater cohesion between the Christian doctrines and a driving purpose for all of doctrine. He also sees more justice done to the concerns of Scripture and its development. Furthermore, he believes that this approach emphasizes the ethical and existential considerations that emerge from the treatment of doctrine rather than the philosophical ones.

Jensen's order for his volume then is eschatology, creation, revelation, salvation, and renewal. This differs from the order that most theological volumes take which would be revelation, God, creation, Christ, salvation, church, and last things. While some might not wish to approach Christian beliefs by this type of pattern, the novelty of this approach certainly makes for an engaging read.

In a book about doctrine, one might expect something more monotonous and predictable. Jensen's volume, however, grapples with ideas current within culture, and then shapes his chapters around these ideas. For example, he follows this approach in addressing the view of God that many people today. He quotes the God that Thomas Hardy, the great English novelist, wrote about and then contrasts this with the Christian God.

In speaking about God, Thomas Hardy once referred to him as 'the dreaming, dark, dumb thing that turns the handle of this idle show'. Hardy's view makes God out to be someone without relationships. It makes him a thing that does not speak and does not have a purpose. This view of God is abstract, dark, and obscure. This is the contemporary, agnostic belief that many have about God.

Addressing this perspective, Jensen then writes about the Christian view of God, a

view that is far different. He presents a God who speaks and a God who makes promises. Indeed, that God has spoken his final word in Jesus Christ, the Word of God. Rather, than being abstract, dark, and obscure, the Christian God is the one who is clear, who has spoken through the Bible and through his Son Jesus Christ, and has a purpose for all of existence. This is just one of many examples, where Jensen takes Christian truth and successfully engages contemporary viewpoints.

This volume fills a need for lay people who are often uncertain about the main beliefs of the Christian faith. Many Christians have not considered an orderly portrayal of traditional Christian beliefs. This book presents a good overview of these beliefs. This volume also serves another purpose. In this day where many beliefs that have never been Christian are being claimed to be Christian, this volume sets clear touchstones by highlighting traditional points of belief.

For those who have never read a theology book, this is a good starter. Chapters are no longer than twelve pages in length. Discussion questions at the end of each chapter are thought provoking and summarize the previous chapter. The book could also serve well for group discussion, especially for those who are interested in exploring the main principles of the Christian faith.

Peter Jensen could strengthen his case further by referring to early Christian creeds. Indeed, it is surprising that greater mention is not made of the early Christian creeds such as Nicene, Chalcedon, or the Apostles Creed. While creeds might seem archaic to those who are pursuing a faith in the modern world, they also emphasize core Christian doctrine that was decided from earliest times. A small appendix on these creeds could strengthen Jensen's work.

ERT (2005) 29:2, 191-192

**The Church  
Sacraments, Worship, Ministry,  
Mission**

**Donald G. Bloesch**

Christian Foundations No 6  
Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002  
0-8308-1416-7  
HB pp 354 indexes

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

If the previous volume in this 'Christian Foundations' series on the Holy Spirit by senior evangelical theologian, Donald Bloesch, was virtually a manual of spirituality (see review ERT 26/4 Oct 2002), this volume is a handbook of pastoral theology. It consists of fourteen chapters covering a wide range of topics, typically surveyed in an introductory chapter, extending from the church, salvation and kingdom to creeds, mission, women in ministry, preaching and worship. While highly theological in character, the discussion is always angled to the outworking of the concepts and principles in the life and work of the church. But where the book offers detailed advice on church practice (on orders of worship and design of church buildings), it is less than successful.

The perspective is ecclesial (although not narrowly denominational), rather than inter- or non-denominational which is the more common approach of evangelical theologies. This approach accounts for the selection of topics and, of course, their treatment. Thus we find comprehensive treatment of topics such as ecumenism, the marks of the church, sacraments and authority—even Mary as a 'type of the church'. In these and other chapters, the author surveys with insight and sensitivity much of the classic and

historic material, and, showing awareness of the contemporary issues, invariably comes back to the need for the church of today to be faithful to its divine calling as the people of God, based on the witness of Scripture and empowered by the Spirit.

Thus 'the ecumenical imperative' in an age of sectarianism is 'not one world church' but churches of all types that 'hold up Christ before the world'—'not the conversion of one church into another but the continued conversion of all churches to Jesus Christ and his gospel'. Similarly, on the vexed issue of authority and leadership in the church, the author makes it clear that 'The pope has authority when he submits himself unreservedly to Scripture, when he places the gospel over his own wisdom and insights' and would 'earn the right to be listened to when he ceases to think of himself as a supreme authority in the church and is willing to view himself as simply a servant of the Word', for papal statements can only be a 'dim reflection of the truth of the gospel' unless purified and reinterpreted 'by the Holy Spirit speaking through the Scriptures'.

What holds this variety of topics together is the author's concern for 'reformation [of the church] in the light of the Word of God and revival through the outpouring of the Spirit of God' which is founded on his distinctive underlying theology of Word and Spirit. The combination of these characteristics results in some highly perceptive, challenging and unusual discussions.

For example, the chapter on the 'Marks of the Church' commences by drawing attention to polarisation that has occurred by over-emphasizing either the Word (as in the tendency to 'biblicistic rationalism' of the Reformers) or the Spirit (Irenaeus or Moltmann). A short discussion of the classic 'Catholic Consensus' on the four marks, however,

is followed by a valuable addition—on the ‘Practical Marks’ which relate to its identity and activity, making it ‘visible to the world’. These marks include the Reformers’ faithful preaching, gospel sacraments and discipline, but go on to cover fellowship of love, mission and service (of the Pietists and other spiritual movements), right teaching, peace, suffering and faithful leadership, holiness, community of later groups, and even signs and wonders (Pentecostal), liberation, and prayer. Not all of these are necessary for the essence of the church (not even sacraments and right doctrine!), for fear of ‘excluding those whom God includes’, whatever their limitations may be. But the author is still not finished, because he moves on to a section on ‘Marks of the False Church’—which he identifies as insularism and exclusivism, inclusivism, latitudinarianism, heretodoxism and experimentalism. Ultimately the mark of a true church is not some outward form in and of itself, but the fact that ‘people are brought into mystical union with Christ through faith and repentance’.

Another interesting chapter brings a sociological approach to the study of the church, with focus on work in this field by Troeltsch, Weber, Niebuhr and others. Although writing from a mainline church position, the author’s evangelical spirit finds considerable sympathy for the ‘sect type’ in that ‘churches, institutions firmly established in society and standing in continuity with Christian tradition, need to incorporate the sectarian impulse if they are to maintain their religious identity and remain true to their mission of bringing hope and meaning to a lost and despairing world’. As helpful as this sociological taxonomy is for the understanding of the church’s mission, Bloesch does not believe the church’s life is determined purely by its social context and so charac-

teristically calls attention to the need also for a theological analysis, focusing on issues of orthodoxy, heresy and apostasy. The intensity of this book increases as it proceeds, with chapters calling for renewal of worship, a recovery of biblical preaching and increased attention to the urgent need for the church’s gospel mission in a syncretistic world. Like a ‘tract for the times’, it comes to a climax in the final chapter which draws attention to ‘the foundations of religion... crumbling’, ‘theocentric worship.. fast eroding’, increasing syncretism, people ‘hankering after other gods’. In the light of these developments, the author declares that the ‘church is impelled to declare anew the biblical truth that there is only one God and that he has revealed himself decisively and irrevocably in Jesus Christ, who is attested and exalted in Scripture’. Hence he calls for ‘a confessing church’ that ‘courageously confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord and that the gospel is crucial in our time and culture’. This is not a ‘creedal church’ although ‘a confessional stance will invariably lead to a restatement of the Christian faith that will sharpen what is distinctive’. Such a confession arising out of intense study and prayer, would have as its goal ‘a purified and reformed church’—it would speak to the whole church, and prophetically to the world.

We need not agree necessarily with all of the author’s views on the vast range of topics covered in this volume or with his assessment of the state of the church and culture to recognize the virtues of this type of approach to theology in general and ecclesiology in particular—a theology of Word and Spirit that seeks ‘a contemporary reaffirmation of old truths, one that is based on the Bible, illumined by the Spirit and appropriated in the evangelical experience of an awakened heart’.

## ABSTRACTS/INDEXING

This journal is abstracted in Religious and Theological Abstracts, 121 South College Street (P.O. Box 215), Myerstown, PA 17067, USA, and in the Christian Periodical Index, P.O. Box 4, Cedarville, OH 45314, USA.

It is also indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, published by the American Theological Library Association, 250 S. Wacker Dr., 16th Flr., Chicago, Illinois 60606-5834 USA, E-mail: atla@atla.com, Web: www.atla.com/

## MICROFORM

This journal is available on Microform from UMI, 300 North Zeeb Road, P.O. Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346, USA. Phone: (313)761-4700

## Subscription rates

Period	Institutions			Individuals		
	UK	USA & Canada	Elsewhere Overseas	UK	USA & Canada	Elsewhere Overseas
One Year	£28.80	\$76.00	£30.40	£28.80	\$49.40	£30.40
Two/Three Years, per year	£25.90	\$68.40	£27.40	£25.90	\$44.50	£27.40

**2/3rds world, individuals and institutions:**  
50% discount on the overseas sterling (£) rates listed above.

**All subscriptions to:**  
Paternoster Periodicals, PO Box 300, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 0QS, UK  
Tel: UK 0800 195 7969; Fax: 01228 51 49 49  
Tel Overseas: +44(0) 1228 611723; Fax +44(0) 1228 514949  
Email pp@stl.org  
Web Site: www.paternoster-publishing.com

### Important Note to all Postal Subscribers

When contacting our Subscription Office in Carlisle for any reason **always quote your Subscription Reference Number.** This appears on the address label used to send your copies to you.

### Photocopying Licensing

No part of the material in this journal may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of Paternoster Periodicals, except where a licence is held to make photocopies.

Applications for such licences should be made to the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE.

It is illegal to take multiple copies of copyright material.

### Awakening:

## The Life and Ministry of Robert Murray McCheyne

David Robertson

The book is a contemporary account of the life of one of Scotland's greatest and most influential preachers, Robert Murray McCheyne. It looks at how McCheyne was used by God in the nineteenth century to awaken an inner city industrialised community, and considers what the modern church can learn about such outreach.

A story of personal devotion, outreach and renewal, this biography also surveys McCheyne's upbringing, conversion, training for the ministry and the revival that occurred in St Peter's in 1839. *Awakening* is an exciting story of what God did through McCheyne and his friends and a reminder of what God can do today in our lives.

**David Robertson** is the minister of St Peter's Church, Dundee, the church of Robert Murray McCheyne. He is chaplain at the University of Dundee and Dundee Football Club.

*'Having used Robert Murray McCheyne's 1842 Bible Reading Calendar for many years...I am very glad that David Robertson has written this new biography.'*  
John Stott, author, theologian and missionary

*'The most stimulating introduction to the life and ministry of McCheyne in print. David Robertson has given us the freshest presentation of McCheyne available.'*

Ligon Duncan, Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Free Church, Jackson, MS, USA

ISBN: 1-84227-173-3 / 198x130mm / 256pp / £8.99

### The Gospel Driven Church:

## Retrieving Classical Ministries for Contemporary Revivalism (Deep Church Series)

Ian Stackhouse

Charismatic Renewal has at the core of its ideology an aspiration for revival. This is a laudable aspiration, but in recent years, in the absence of a large-scale evangelistic impact, it has encouraged a faddist mentality among church leaders.

*The Gospel Driven Church* documents this development and the numerous theological and pastoral distortions that take place when genuine revival fervour transmutes into revivalism. Moreover, Stackhouse aims to show how a retrieval of some of the core practices of the church, such as preaching, sacraments, the laying on of hands and prayer is essential at this crucial stage in the trajectory of the renewal movement in the UK. He commends to church leaders a recovery of these means of grace – including Spirit baptism – as a way of keeping the church centred on the gospel rather than mere pragmatic concerns about size and numbers.

**Ian Stackhouse** is Pastoral Leader of Guildford Baptist Church.

ISBN: 1-84227-290-X / 198x130mm / 304pp / £12.99

**Paternoster, 9 Holdom Avenue, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK1 1QR, UK**