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



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Editorial: Life Work and Witness

IN THIS ISSUE WE plunge into the public world and examine how some aspects of our faith and practice are related. The first article (responding to an earlier paper on the topic) focuses on work itself, and shows how it has an eschatological significance as it anticipates the new creation. Then Timoteo Gener (The Philippines) asks about the role of theology in the public arena, examining some ideas from David Tracy, and searching for a truly transformationist Christian perspective on public culture. Finally for this section, we become very practical and follow Samuel Jayakumar (India) as he looks at the situation in his country, where poverty is rule rather than the exception. His burden to understand how the Christian gospel can transform society and empower the poor.

We cannot escape the challenge to develop a truly transformational mission, so our fourth article is rather pointed. Daniel Salinas (Paraguay) looks ahead to the next big evangelical meeting, Lasuane III Cape Town, 2010, and enquiries whether this will be an opportunity for authentic engagement with these realities and cause 'evangelicals around the world to incarnate the Kingdom's values with

compassion and Christian love to people in need.'

Finally, coming back to our source and heart, Lee Wanak (The Philippines) draws our attention to an outstanding feature of Jesus' ministry—and one that might be a useful one to bear in mind in this context—the careful use of questions. Wanak suggests that by asking thought provoking questions, Jesus sought to transform the assumptions of his first century listeners with the idea of introducing a new set of kingdom values.

We conclude with a longer than usual book review section, headed off by a review article by Amos Yong evaluating an ambitious project to understand evangelicalism; this is followed up by another issuing a radical call to evangelicals to be 'good news people.' Other reviews take up the usual wide range of issues that pour from the presses, including in particular Early African Christianity and its legacy, Jewish evangelism, Latin American theology and post-modernism. We welcome suggestions of books and reviewers, especially from the Majority world, as we do articles. Contact the editor for more information.

David Parker, Editor

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Niggle's Leaf and Holland's Opus: Reflections on the Theological Significance of Work

Richard Langer

KEYWORDS: *Theology of work, calling, new creation, eschatological continuity, duty*

MIROSLAV VOLF FIRST published his ground-breaking book, *Work in the Spirit*, in 1991. It garnered immediate and well-deserved attention both because of the intrinsic importance of work for Christian life and practice, but also because he attempted a sea change in our theological thinking about work. He presented a Christian theology of work grounded in eschatology and pneumatology rather than in notions of vocation and original creation. His work also became the leading edge of a budding genre of theological reflection on work.¹

¹ Some recent representative works include: David H. Jensen, *Responsive Labor: A Theology of Work* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 2006), Armand Larive, *After Sunday: A Theology of Work* (New York: Continuum, 2004),

Recently, Darrell Cosden has developed a theology of work which continues and amplifies much of Volf's thought, particularly his emphasis on the importance of the new creation in our understanding of work.² John Jef-

Douglas Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1999). In addition to these works (and those by Cosden mentioned below) which attempt extended theological reflection on work, there are countless books addressing practical issues related to work and the Christian faith, theological reflections on capitalism and free markets, business ethics from a Christian perspective, Christian wisdom for business leadership, and books discussing 'business as mission'. These works often contain chapters laying theological foundations for work with varying degrees of success.

² See Darrell Cosden, *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2004) and Darrell Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (Carlisle: Pater-noster Press, 2006)

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erson Davis has also written on work in the new creation, though his concerns are not with the connection between our current work and the new creation but rather with the ongoing presence of work within the new creation itself.³

Though I will ultimately argue for retaining a more traditional view of work grounded in vocation and in the 'old' creation, I will also argue that Volf, Cosden and others are right in seeing an eschatological significance in our work. Unfortunately, I believe that eschatological significance is found in a different place and pointed in the opposite direction. To illustrate this difference, I will appeal to two stories: a short story by J.R.R. Tolkien entitled 'Leaf by Niggle' and a story told in a movie entitled 'Mr. Holland's Opus.' The first story is set in an explicitly eschatological context and is used to examine alternative possibilities for understanding the eschatological significance of work. The second story is used to probe more deeply into the significance of work as it is traditionally understood. Together they build a case for an eschatologically broadened, but ultimately traditional, understanding of human work.

I Volf's 'Work in the Spirit'

I will use Volf's *Work in the Spirit* as the framework for discussing the new theologies of work, making additional comments to Cosden's work as appropriate. Much of the theological core is

³ John Jefferson Davis, 'Will There Be New Work in the New Creation?', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31, no. 3 (2007)

shared in common in these works, both of which draw substantially on Moltmann's eschatological vision. Without disputing the many virtues of an eschatologically-grounded theology of work, I do have some fundamental concerns. First, it seems that both Volf and Cosden assume an overstated discontinuity between old and new creations when discussing traditional views of work.

This overstatement may serve to blind them to the possibility that traditional views of work might also find a connection between our work in the present age and the new creation. In other words, I do not believe that affirming eschatological significance in our work requires a theology of work grounded in the new creation. Similarly, I believe there is a tendency to overstate the eschatological significance of work at the expense of its protological significance. I do not believe that the mere fact that there is eschatological meaning to our work entails that the eschatological meaning is primary.

1. Eschatology and continuity

Volf begins his discussion of work and the new creation by identifying a fundamental bifurcation in Christian eschatology:

Christian theologians have held two basic positions on the eschatological future of the world. Some stressed radical discontinuity between present and future orders, believing in the complete destruction of the present world at the end of the ages and creation of a fully new world. Others postulated the continuity between the two, believ-

ing that the present world will be transformed into the new heaven and the new earth. Two radically different theologies follow from these two basic eschatological models.⁴

Christians, it seems, come in two sorts: one sort stresses what Volf calls 'radical discontinuity' between present and future orders, the other sort postulates continuity between present and future. Regarding work, the result of embracing discontinuity is to make human work 'devoid of direct ultimate significance,' because the annihilation of the old creation entails the annihilation of human work in the old creation. The new creation arrives *ex nihilo*—totally disjunctively from the old creation.

In contrast, those who affirm continuity believe that the old creation will be 'transformed' into the new creation and our works will be transformed with it. New creation is not creation *ex nihilo*, but rather a transformation of the old into something new—*transformatio mundi* rather than *annihilatio mundi*. Because the old is continuous with the new, but transformed, our work has enduring value. It survives, in some meaningful sense, the eschatological transformation. Not only are human persons redeemed, but also the work of their hands.

In the absence of such continuity, Volf finds 'human work and its results are eschatologically insignificant.'⁵ He notes that those who affirm annihila-

tion may find eschatological significance in human work by its effect on human souls, but there is no direct significance because the work itself is not enduring.

At first blush, Volf's understanding of discontinuity and annihilation might appear mistaken because many people who believe in the annihilation of the old creation would also believe in the significance of work and cultural involvement. Volf, however, argues that there is an important confusion hidden in such a combination of beliefs. He admits that it is 'logically compatible' to affirm annihilation and social and cultural involvement, but he argues that embracing both is *theologically* inconsistent.⁶

This is because 'under the presupposition that the world is not intrinsically good, the only theologically plausible justification for cultural involvement would be that such involvement diminishes the suffering of the body and contributes to the good of the soul.'⁷ So, for example, Bach might compose music on annihilationist presuppositions, but his desire for people to take pleasure in the music itself could not be theologically motivated:

He would have no theological reason for this important way of loving others. This problem would not arise, however, if Bach believed in the intrinsic goodness of creation. And he could do this only if he believed in the eschatological transformation rather than destruction.⁸

4 Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 89.

5 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 90.

6 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 90.

7 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 91.

8 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 91.

The outcome of his line of reasoning is that the only work which has true significance is work that endures through to the eschaton. Though we may do our work 'protologically' (in the old or present creation) our work's real validation only comes eschatologically (in the new creation). And continuity, for Volf, seems to include an ontological element—the very products of human work endure and become the building blocks of the new creation. We may not make the new creation directly, but our work is integrated into the new creation by God's act of transformation.⁹

To capture the significance of this Volf suggest we ask ourselves 'whether all those unappreciated small and great Van Goghs in various fields of human activity would not draw inspiration and strength from the belief that their noble efforts are not lost, that everything good, true, and beautiful they create is valued by God and will be appreciated by human beings in the new creation.'¹⁰

Though I am sympathetic to much of what he says, a false dichotomy reverberates throughout Volf's discussion. He suggests that Christians affirm an eschatology of either 'radical discontinuity' or else of 'continuity.' The presence of the modifier 'radical' in one case and its absence in the other is noteworthy. Why not compare radical discontinuity to radical continuity? Or better yet, why not simply compare continuity and discontinuity and leave the radicals to their Parisian cafes? It is clear that 'radical' is not merely

rhetorical flourish. The discontinuity he describes is indeed radical. Not only is the new creation made *ex nihilo*, it is apparently devoid of any shaping influence from the present creation.

Cosden has a similar view of 'annihilationists'. They are said to affirm 'God's punishment of creation will lead to its total destruction and replacement with a new earth that God will make "out of nothing," as he did the original creation.'¹¹ Such radical discontinuity means our ideas, objects and accomplishments are entirely left behind as we move forward into the new creation. This is a result, presumably, of an understanding of annihilation which Volf describes as follows:

belief in eschatological annihilation...is not consonant with the belief in the goodness of creation: what God will annihilate must either be so bad that it is not possible to be redeemed or so insignificant that it is not worth being redeemed. It is hard to believe in the intrinsic value and goodness of something that God will completely annihilate. And without a theologically grounded belief in the intrinsic value and goodness of creation, positive cultural involvement hangs theologically in the air.¹²

But is it necessary for continuity and discontinuity to be formulated in such absolute terms? Similarly, is it proper to understand annihilation and transformation as disjunctive opposites? If so, I wonder who it is who actually affirms annihilation. Presum-

9 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 92.

10 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 92.

11 Cosden, *Heavenly Good*, 112.

12 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 90-91.

ably Volf is referring to the Lutheran theologians cited by Berkouwer who 'favor the concept of annihilation of the present cosmos and of a complete discontinuity between old earth and new.'¹³ But surely such theologians still affirm a continuity between the resurrection body and the present body.¹⁴ The differences between the resurrection body and the earthly body are substantial, but no one denies the continuity even if its exact nature hard to specify. Perhaps Volf's understanding of annihilation and radical discontinuity is somewhat too radical.

From a biblical perspective, the relationship between old and new can be described either by metaphors of transformation or annihilation. Or to put it more precisely, in biblical language old and new creations are described by a set of metaphors rather than a single metaphor. This is *not* because some objects are continuous and others are discontinuous between

the old and new creations. Rather, it would seem that the very nature of the eschatological transformation is both continuous and discontinuous, such that the exact same object undergoing the eschatological transformation will sometimes be described in terms of discontinuity and at other times in terms of continuity.

Consider Paul's observation that 'the earthly tent we live in will be destroyed' and that we will receive 'a heavenly home not made by human hands and which is eternal in the heavens.'¹⁵ Paul expresses the fundamental discontinuity between the resurrection body and the temporal body by a reference to an annihilation metaphor. And it should be noted that *destruction* in this passage is referred to using terms almost identical to those which describe the final conflagration in 2 Peter 3. But Paul also feels compelled to use the language of transformation when describing the resurrection body, using metaphors of waking and sleeping, putting on (in the sense of clothing) and the promise that 'we shall all be changed.'¹⁶ This change is promised without explicit reference to a preceding destruction.

Hoekema aptly summarizes the combination of continuity and discontinuity that marks the resurrection transformation:

Previously we pointed out that there will be both continuity and discontinuity between the present body and the resurrection body. The differences between our present bodies and our resurrection

bodies, wonderful though they are, do not take away the continuity: it is we who shall be raised, and it is we who shall always be with the Lord. Those raised with Christ will not be a totally new set of human beings but the people of God who have lived on this earth.¹⁷

Furthermore, some aspects of the transformation between old and new are best not reduced to either a point of continuity or a point of discontinuity. Paul's use of metaphors such as the death of a seed before it comes to life can best be understood as neither continuity nor discontinuity but rather as marvel or a mystery. This entire section is marked by a sort of grasping at metaphors which are discarded almost as soon as they come to hand. He speaks of sowing seed, then of different kinds of flesh, then of different sorts of heavenly bodies, and finally of bearing the image of dust and bearing the image of heaven. It seems that any single metaphor is inadequate to sustain the scope of Paul's thought. At the end of metaphors is a mystery which still remains.

In summary, then, the eschatological transformation is discontinuous and continuous at the same time. Annihilation is an apt description for the discontinuous aspects of the eschatological transformation without thereby asserting that continuity has no place. Furthermore, single metaphors are

simply inadequate for describing the eschatological transformation between old and new creations.

2. Eschatological significance of work

But Volf and Cosden are not concerned about eschatological continuity and discontinuity in general, but rather the eschatological continuity or discontinuity of our work. They are seeking the significance intrinsic to our work, and argue that it is found in the continuity of our work between old and new creations. Volf points down two tracks in order to understand this relationship.

First, he leans on Hoekema to suggest hints of this sort of thinking which can be found in Scripture. He notices that Paul believes a man can 'build upon Christ, the foundation, with gold or silver, so that his work will remain in the consummation and he will receive a reward (1 Cor. 3:14).' Secondly, the Book of Revelation mentions works which will follow the believers in the consummation (Rev. 14:13). And finally, in the description of the new Jerusalem, it is said that kings will bring their glory into the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:24, 26). This last is also a theme that Cosden takes up in his discussion of Revelation 21 and 22.¹⁸

But each of these examples is problematic if appealed to as support for the continuity of the products of our work between the old and new creations. Beginning with the glory of the kings, it is not at all clear that this refers 'some continuity between the

¹³ Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), citing Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics—the Return of Christ*, 220, n. 18. See also Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 737.

¹⁴ Volf cites Stott's summary of the Lausanne Consultation. Some affirmed 'discontinuity based on the destructive nature of God's judgment and the newness of the new creation. Others believe that just as after the new birth we are not a different person but the same person remade, so the universe is going to experience a new birth.' But Stott goes on to say 'We all believe that about our bodies, for the principle of continuity is evident in the resurrected body of Jesus.' See John Stott, 'Evangelism and Social Responsibility,' in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: Lausanne Occasional Papers* (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, Grand Rapids: 1982), 41.

¹⁵ 2 Cor. 5:1

¹⁶ 1 Cor. 15:20, 53, 52.

¹⁷ Hoekema, *Bible & Future*, 280. Hoekema is explicit in affirming both continuity and discontinuity (see *The Bible and the Future*, 38-39). Volf seems to read the both/and position as a denial of annihilation rather than simply as an affirmation of transformation.

¹⁸ Cosden, *Heavenly Good*, 72-77.

culture of the present world and that of the world to come.”¹⁹ Revelation 21 pictures the kings of the Gentile nations entering the new Jerusalem and thereby submitting themselves and their kingdoms to the sovereignty of Christ. It is not unlike the twenty-four elders in Revelation 4 casting their crowns before the throne of God. What the highest representatives of the people of God begin in Revelation 4 is completed in Revelation 21 by Gentile kings making a similar acknowledgement. There is no particular reason to believe the *works* of these Gentile kings enter the new Jerusalem intact.

Similarly, the statement in Revelation 14 reassuring the saints that they can rest from their works because ‘their deeds follow them,’ provides scant warrant for a belief in the continuity of the products of our works. The context of this statement is as follows: ‘I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Blessed indeed,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors for their deeds will follow them!’”.

This clearly attaches to preceding paragraph describing the endurance of the saints and their willingness to keep the commandments in the face of persecution. They are to have confidence that ‘their deeds will follow them’ in the sense of having confidence that the judgments spoken against those who received the mark of the beast will not apply to them. Their deeds of faithful obedience will follow them in the form of protection from judgment which befalls those who did not do faithful

deeds but rather worshiped the beast and received his mark. Volf himself comments that he understands this passage not to refer to the products of work (which seems to be what Hoekema has in mind) but rather to the effect our works have on the shape of our personality.²⁰

Finally, regarding Hoekema’s contention that 2 Corinthians chapter 3 refers to the continuity of work after the consummation, it should be noted that this context is very narrowly focused on the work of spiritual ministry. What endures are the products of his work in the form of transformed lives built into God’s building—a metaphor for the church. The work itself is not enduring; Paul’s preaching will not be repeated in heaven. Paul also looks forward to receiving an eschatological reward, but again, this is different than his work.

Volf himself offers some additional considerations regarding how our work continues into the new creation.²¹ Specifically, he suggests:

a) We contribute our small portion to the whole of human knowledge, and upon this the next generation stands to see farther and do more. Even if our work itself does not survive, it may make another work possible which does survive.

b) Human work leaves an imprint on natural and social environments and creates a home for human beings without which they could not exist... Even if every single human product throughout history will not be integrated into

the world to come, this home as a whole will be integrated.

c) Work and its perceived results define in part the structure of human beings’ personality, their identity. Since resurrection will be not a negation but an affirmation of human earthly identity, earthly work will have an influence on resurrected personality. Rondet rightly asks whether Gutenberg in a glorified state would be Gutenberg apart from any eschatological relation to the discovery that made him famous.

Cosden is sensible to similar considerations. As he discusses the New Jerusalem, he comments that the apocalyptic vision ‘suggests that God is pleased to gather up, transform, and include not just his “pure” creation, but also the genuine additions to the created reality that we have brought about through creation-transforming actions.’²² He also encourages us to think of the

cumulative nature and impact of our work on this earth and on the whole of humanity. Think about how different our world would be had someone not invented the wheel. God’s judgment about the ‘goodness’ or otherwise of the wheel we invented does not apply only to the ‘original’ wheel. It involves a judgment of all that has resulted from there being wheels—all that we have built upon, and from, and with, this invention.²³

I cannot speak for others, but this level of continuity of the ‘products’ or ‘results’ of our work seems like pretty

thin gruel. My work is aggregated into the entire accomplishments of human history. Together, humanity has made earth into a habitable human home. Human beings have invented and used the wheel. But my work is vanishingly small painted on such a vast canvas. This may be a good account of the cosmic and eschatological significance of human work, but it is a very poor account of the existential significance of human work. I remember spending an entire summer unable to find a job and struggling with intolerably long days and gnawing feelings of depression. It would hardly have made me feel better to remind myself that I was nonetheless human, and human beings had invented the wheel.

There may very well be eschatological significance to the invention of the wheel, but it is of little existential significance to the individual human person. I would argue that a well-formed theology of work must be able to give a good account of work’s profound existential significance. Perhaps there are hints of an eschatological meaning for the individual person in Volf’s reminder that work helps shape my resurrection personality, but why is that more significant than more traditional values of human work such as loving my neighbor or earning divine rewards? Does it matter so much that my personality comes through intact to the new creation? Our work may continue into the eschaton, but as described by Volf and Cosden, it seems to be of little real significance for the individual worker.

3. Other Concerns

I have three other concerns about

²⁰ Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 97-98.

²¹ Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 96.

²² Cosden, *Heavenly Good*, 75.

²³ Cosden, *Heavenly Good*, 115

¹⁹ Hoekema, *Bible and the Future*, 74.

grounding a theology of work in the new creation. The first of these is characteristic of both Volf and Cosden, the second two concerns attach specifically to Volf.

a) Both Volf and Cosden focus their discussions of the traditional view of work on Lutheran notions of work and calling.²⁴ Of particular importance is the strand of Lutheran thought that affirms the fixity of calling. This is an artifact of Luther's exegesis of 1 Corinthians 7:20 as well as his sense of parallelism between our spiritual and external call (since the spiritual call is singular and irrevocable, our external call must be as well). Volf notes that the combination of these factors contributes to a stagnating conservatism and blinds one to important modern concerns about the social structures of work which often contribute to degrading and alienating forms of work.

But this Lutheran reading of calling is unfortunate, at least in an American context, because Calvin's understanding of calling as mediated by the Puritans has been far more influential. Calvin was suspicious of human social structures. His understanding of human depravity implied that the social structures that created one's *Lebenstand* could be corrupted by sin and might stand in need of redemption. Our divine calling might be to change our social setting, not accept it.²⁵ Once again, it should be noted, that such

reform would be a distinctively protological task.²⁶

b) Volf rejects as naïve the notion that an adequate theology of work can be built on induction from biblical passages,²⁷ but there must be a middle ground between such a simplistic theology by concordance and an authentic biblical theology. I believe Scripture provides more theological ore than Volf mines. Clearly such a theology is complicated by the dramatic changes in the social structure surrounding work which have taken place since biblical times. However, the nature of creation itself and the necessities of human life are largely unchanged.

The work of gathering and eating is intrinsic to our creaturely existence and appointed by God himself. Human beings are still made in the image of a God who is a worker. The biblical God finds pleasure in work, unlike the gods of ancient Greek and Babylonian literature. Biblically, work elevates humans by making us more god-like rather than less god-like. We imitate God by working for the pleasure of 'doing well something that is well worth doing'.²⁸

Work is also a context where we show our fidelity to God both by obedi-

26 Williams makes this point in a response to some of Volf's early work. See Stephen N. Williams, 'The Partition of Love and Hope: Eschatology and Social Responsibility,' *Transformation* 7, no. 3 (1990), 24-27.

27 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 77, and Lee Hardy, review of *Work in the Spirit: Toward a New Theology of Work*, *Calvin Theological Journal* 28, no. 1 (1993), 192.

28 This expression is borrowed from Dorothy Sayers, *Creed or Chaos?*, reissue ed. (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute, 1995), 63.

ence to his commands and by stewardship of his gifts to us.²⁹ By our work we share in God's work, becoming channels of both special and common grace: of special grace as we proclaim the Gospel and build up the church, and of common grace as we turn the seed which God provides the sower into bread which can sustain the eater. This is barely scratching the surface of biblical material related to work.

Since Volf does not set out to do a biblical theology of work, this criticism may seem irrelevant. But what does pertain to Volf's concerns is that these threads of biblical teaching are all strongly rooted in the *old* rather than the *new* creation. There is very little which points us forward out of this age into the next. At the very least, such biblical considerations go a long way towards explaining historical pre-occupations with a protological rather than eschatological perspectives on work.

c) Volf makes a specific effort to connect his theology of work in the new creation with the work of the Spirit. He accomplishes this primarily by associating human work with 'charisms' or spiritual gifts. To him, the gifts are the Spirit's empowerment for our various vocations:

If we must understand specific function and task of a Christian in the church and in the world charismatically, then everyday work cannot be an exception. The Spirit of God calls, endows, and empowers Christians to work in their various vocations. The charismatic nature of all Christian activity is the theo-

logical basis for a pneumatological understanding of work.³⁰

I do not find his reading of spiritual gifts to be biblically grounded enough to carry the theological weight required of it. There is a comparatively narrow biblical usage of this phrase that should be honored in our theology. This point is raised by Hardy in his review of Volf's book and I think Hardy's response is still quite to the point.³¹

I also reject his understanding of the work of non-Christians as being 'in the Spirit.' Without going into the details of his argument, let me simply observe that I am far more inclined to understand secular gifts and talents to be divine endowments extended as part of common grace rather than to try to force them into the category of spiritual gifts. In general, it seems misleading to describe the work of non-Christians as 'done in the Spirit'.

Volf seeks support for this notion from Basil of Caesarea who states that creation possesses 'no power, no motivation, or ingenuity needed for work that it did not receive from the Spirit of God.' From this, Volf infers that there is an important sense in which all human work is done 'in the power of the Spirit'.³² Certainly there is a sense in which this is true, but do we really want to call this an *important* sense? All human work ultimately depends on

24 See Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 105-110 and Cosden, *Heavenly Good*, 38-45.

25 Lee Hardy, *The Fabric of This World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1990). See especially his discussion of reforming fallen structures, 63-67.

30 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 113.

31 See Hardy, 195-196. Volf's response to Hardy's criticisms on the issue of spiritual gifts is found in, Miroslav Volf, 'Eschaton, Creation, and Social Ethics,' *Calvin Theological Journal* 30, no. 1 (1995), 138-143.

32 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 118.

29 In this context I am thinking both of spiritual gifts and of human talents in general.

divine power, but nonetheless many human works are sinful and vicious. If the sense one makes of 'in the power of the Spirit' is so broad as to encompass all human work including Nazi death camps, surely this sense is not important but rather hopelessly broad.

II Eschatology and the significance of work

So must we reject the eschatological significance of work? I think not. I believe there is an eschatological significance to our work, but it is not directly grounded in the new creation. Furthermore, though our work has an important eschatological element, it is not necessarily more important than the traditional (protological) significance of work.

I would like to advance my case by means of two thought experiments regarding the significance of human work. The first of these two fictional examples will help us understand the eschatological connection between human work and the new creation. We will discover that there is a connection, but it points in the opposite direction of what Volf and Cosden suggest. The second example will move us back to the protological significance of work and argue that work can be meaningful even in the absence of direct eschatological connections.

1. Niggle's Leaf

J.R.R. Tolkien wrote a provocative short story entitled *Leaf by Niggle*.³³ It

³³ J. R. R. Tolkien, 'Leaf by Niggle,' in *Tree and Leaf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989)

tells of a man named Niggle whose passion and purpose was to paint. Specifically, he wanted to paint a picture of a tree—or more properly of a leaf, that drew him onward to a tree, and then to an entire landscape. The vision was so compelling, he forgot about all his other pictures or else incorporated them into the ever-growing tree and landscape he was painting on his ever-growing canvas.

He also had a nearby neighbor, a man named Parish, who was lame and had a sickly wife. Niggle was often called upon to help Parish when his leg was particularly bad or his wife was particularly ill. This was always somewhat irritating to Niggle since it took him away from his picture, but there was nothing to be done. He had to do his duty. And of course there were countless other distractions which kept delaying his progress. And looming ominously in the background of this story is the long journey that Niggle knew he would have to take, but for which he was always reluctant to prepare.

He often castigated himself for not being 'strong-minded' enough to resist the other calls of life and focus fully on his painting. He was worried he would not be able to complete it before he had to depart for his long journey. Just as he was getting a sense of urgency about his painting, Parish's wife took ill and Niggle was called upon to ride his bike through the rain to call a doctor. Niggle knew this might mean he couldn't finish his painting, but Parish couldn't ride a bike and there was nothing to be done. He had to go. And, of course, the delay proved tragic. By the time he had recovered from the cold he contracted while riding his bike

through the rain, the Driver arrived to take him on his journey. The painting would have to be left undone.

As the reader quickly becomes aware, this Driver is taking him on his final journey—by Tolkien's eschatology one that includes a trip through Purgatory and then gradually on to his vision of the eternal state. For our present concerns, however, this aspect of his eschatology is relatively unimportant. After his initial season of hard labor (what I would deem to be his metaphorical purgatory), Niggle is released to another land. In fact, his release comes early in part because in life he had exhibited a willingness to do his duty to neighbor without expecting a reward.

The new land is a sort of foothills of heaven and as he wanders through it, he suddenly rounds a corner and before him stands the Tree, his Tree. And it is finished. Tolkien describes the moment as follows:

He gazed at the Tree, and slowly he lifted his arms and opened them wide. 'It's a gift!' he said. He was referring to his art, and also to the result; but he was using the word quite literally.

He proceeds to admire the Tree in all its beauty, noticing leaves he had labored over in life as well as leaves that were only buds in his mind and other leaves that 'might have budded if only he had had the time.' And there were birds flying to and fro, and an entire forest around the Tree and mountains beyond.

As the story unfolds, Niggle is ultimately reunited with Parish in this forest and they work the land together making it into the most beautiful of

places. Finally, Niggle is called on to the higher mountains but Parish stays behind to await his wife.

The final narration informs us what became of Niggle's actual painting in the original world. Because of its size, it proved useful as a large piece of canvas to cover a hole in Parish's roof after Niggle departed on his journey. A corner of the painting tore off: a spray of leaves and a mountain-peak. A sympathetic passer-by took a fancy to it, framed it and put it in a local museum. But the museum burned down and the painting with it and Niggle was 'entirely forgotten in his own country.'

This story is provocative because of how it portrays the connection between eschatology and the meaning of our work. Niggle was clearly driven by what could be called an eschatological vision. He saw something, but that which he saw was of the next world not this world. His labor in this world was to paint his eschatological Tree, but not to plant it. In other words, the product of his labor was a painting not a tree and not a forest.

In the new creation, his painting was not cleansed of its imperfections and purified through a transforming and preserving act of God. It was not completed and hung in a new creation art gallery. The final end of his painting was, simply put, annihilation. It was turned into a tarp and the only part that was kept as a painting was ultimately burned in a fire. The destiny of his protological work was to be annihilated, not to be transformed.

It may be that I am constraining Volf's notion of continuity too narrowly. Perhaps the connection between painting and forest is a continuous one—allowing for an episode

of divine transformation in-between. But then it would seem that Bach's music could undergo a similar transformation and come out on the other side not as music but as a waterfall or a moonlit glade. When the transformations are so discontinuous, the language of annihilation and the language of transformation become one. I can't imagine Bach's work being intrinsically meaningful on one set of assumptions but not on the other. What is ruled out is a radical discontinuity which makes the new creation entirely disjunctive from the old—not haunted as it were by the ghosts of paintings and symphonies from a distant land. But there is no reason annihilation must destroy all connection.

As was pointed out earlier, this sort of radical disjunction seems to be ruled out by more clear cases of continuity such as the resurrection body, the preservation of personal identity, the memory of martyrdom, the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve Apostles whose names are inscribed on the foundations of the new Jerusalem, and countless other reminders that there was a creation that preceded the new creation.

But obviously there is a connection between his painting and the new creation. As Tolkien tells the story, the reader is teased with the thought of Niggle having painted that part of the new creation into being. On the other hand, the new creation explicitly contained much that Niggle never conceived of but only 'could have conceived if he had had the time.' It would seem the eschatological fulfillment of his vision was a joint venture between Niggle and God.

The meaning and significance of

work is found by making something in this world which *anticipates* the next, even though it may not *participate* in the next. Volf seems to argue that for work to be meaningful it must actually participate in the new creation—it must be eschatologically durable.³⁴ He wants to bring objects of the old creation *forward* into the new creation. I would argue that it is more proper to understand our work as an attempt to bring visions of the new creation *backward* into the present state.

Our protological work does not have a *participatory* relationship with the new creation but rather an *anticipatory* relationship. We know that the day is coming when these visions will receive their true fulfillment, but that is a distant day. We have need of tangible reminders lest we forget our calling as we labor in our temporal context.

In this sense, anticipatory work is sacramental—creating visible reminders of invisible realities. The Lord's Supper is a visible reminder of the death of Christ which we celebrate 'until he comes.' It is a *retrospective reminder* of what Christ has done. Our work is analogous though different; it is (or can be understood as) a *prospective anticipation* of what Christ will do.

In order for our work to succeed on these terms, it need not be eschatologically durable. It can pass away having fulfilled its purpose if it creates an authentic anticipation of Christ's king-

34 This is not to say that Volf is blind to an anticipatory relationship between our work and the new creation (see *Work in the Spirit*, 80). Rather, it seems that whatever meaning derives from this anticipatory relationship is negligible compared to the meaning that comes from participation in the new creation.

dom in the present world, thereby making this world—at least for a moment—glimmer with the light of the next. Tolkien captures the significance of such anticipatory work beautifully when he recounts the interaction between Parish and the 'shepherd' who comes to take Niggle on to the heavenly mountains. Parish asks him the name of the country that Niggle and he have been living in; the shepherd tells him it is called 'Niggle's Picture'. Parish is amazed that Niggle had conceived of this beautiful place and marvels that Niggle was so clever, and asks why Niggle never told him of all this. The shepherd reminds Parish of the picture that Niggle was always working on back in the country from which they came:

'But it did not look like this then, not real,' said Parish.

'No, it was only a glimpse then,' said the man; 'but you might have caught the glimpse, if you had ever thought it worthwhile to try.'

Our anticipatory work is a proclamation of the kingdom for those who have ears to hear and eyes to glimpse. Though many do not think it is worth the while to try to glimpse the coming Kingdom, those of us who eagerly await it are called to grant seekers of that Kingdom the best glimpse we can offer. And our glimpses also fulfill a purpose by keeping us actively longing for the next world and the transformation of our anticipatory paintings into glorified reality. And it should be added that it is not only our successful work but also our failures that helps us cultivate a longing anticipation for what is to come.

The bitterness of our vision fallen

short fosters a longing for the sweetness of our vision fulfilled. The joyful anticipation of the future and the heartfelt mourning of the present are both authentic Christian emotions in this fallen world. Creation's groaning is not to be silenced until the new creation comes—the groans keep us awake, watchful and working.

The fact that our work is anticipatory relative to the new creation rather than participatory also protects us from the dangers of misguided utopic visions—one of the most disconcerting aspects of 20th century history. As Francis Bridger comments:

Paradoxically, the fact that it is God who will bring about a new order of creation at the End and that we are merely erecting signposts to that future need not act as a disincentive. Rather it frees us from the burden of ethical and technological autonomy and makes it clear that human claims to sovereignty are relative. The knowledge that it is God's world, that our efforts are not directed toward the construction of an ideal utopia but that we are under God, building bridgeheads of the kingdom serves to humble us and to bring us to the place of ethical obedience.³⁵

So in these many ways and more there is a profound connection between eschatology and our work. But I would argue that none of these connections trumps the priority of the protological aspects of our work. Tolkien seems to share this doubt because as much as

35 Cited in Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 411.

the story praises the anticipatory work in Niggle's painting, it is clear that the Voices in his story that represent God's evaluation of Niggle's work are much less concerned with his eschatological vision than with his protological duty.

He is commended for being faithful to serve Parish in the most mundane of ways—and having done so without the expectation of reward. He is commended for having left his painting and gone to get the doctor in the rain on behalf of Parish's wife, even though he knew his time was short. Niggle even guessed she wasn't all that sick, and indeed events proved she was not, but he went nonetheless. He is commended, in effect, for his refusal to let his eschatological vision trump his protological duty.

2. Holland's Opus

My second example develops the importance of protological duties even more directly. The movie *Mr. Holland's Opus* tells the story of a musician who dreams of writing a brilliant orchestral composition. However, the realities of life press in upon him and he decides to take a position as a high school music teacher. He continues to work on his 'opus', but the challenges of balancing school, family life, and dealing with a son who happens to be born deaf renders progress on his opus ponderously slow. His love and concern for his students also weighs heavily on his heart. He loves to see students flourish and succeed and he often finds himself believing in students who no longer believe in themselves. Budget cuts make teaching even more difficult, frustrations mount with his son's disability, and finally an attractive and

gifted student tempts him to leave his mundane life and chase his dream. And of course, in the midst of these trials, the opus is neglected.

However, a variety of circumstances conspire to make help Mr. Holland realize the life he has is best embraced and his dream is best left simmering on the back burner. He does his duty, and his symphonic masterpiece remains incomplete and unperformed. Unperformed, that is, until the day he retires and unbeknownst to him an orchestra of his former students is assembled and together they play—as best they can, his opus—which has only been completed as best he can.

The movie plays with predictable pathos—but there is a point to this story, a point most germane to our present discussion. In contrast to *Leaf by Niggle*, the opus by Holland is not driven by an eschatological vision but rather a protological one. Mr. Holland, as portrayed in the movie, does not have a vision of the new creation that he is trying to express through his art. He is simply trying to write music for this world which he finds lovely and hopes others will as well. And at the end, the opus is completed not by being purified by divine transformation and brought forward into the new creation. Rather, its final expression comes in the here and now—at the hands of less than skilled high-school caliber musicians. Holland's Opus differs from Niggle's Leaf exactly at the point eschatological fulfillment. Niggle's Leaf had a future in the eschaton, Holland's Opus did not. But does that mean Holland's Opus was insignificant?

I think not.

Though Holland's theological sentiments are not laid bare in this movie,

let us assume he is an earnest Christian—at least as earnest as Niggle. On this assumption, is Holland's Opus significant? I would argue that Holland's Opus is indeed significant, but his primary opus was not his musical score but rather his students. His work was not deemed worthwhile because of its musical merit, but rather because of the way he served his students, loved his wife and son, and ultimately the sort of character he formed within himself. And furthermore, by the standards of the New Testament, he has a clearer warrant for claiming to have done good works than if he had written a work that surpassed Mozart in musical quality, but in so doing had neglected his other duties. Mr. Holland, when pressed, chose the better portion.

This does not mean music is bad, or insignificant. Indeed, I would argue that there are times and situations in which it might very well be appropriate to place a higher emphasis on music. However, those situations were not Holland's situation. He was married, and therefore had an abiding duty to love and be faithful to his wife. He had a son, therefore he had a duty to love and provide for him—doubly so in light of his disability. He was a teacher, and therefore he had a duty to teach, train and shape his students to the best of his ability.

This was his situation and such were his circumstances. They were not necessarily chosen by him. In fact, if we assume he was a Christian we might also assume he would view these circumstances as providentially thrust upon him by God. God was, in effect, posing him a question by his life circumstances which he was to answer

with his life choices. His family, his work, his community were all part of his calling in a sense that is very familiar to us from Luther. These things constituted his *Lebenstand*. It was a kind of life that was imposed on him by the providence of God—and vocation, as William Perkins puts it, simply is 'a kind of life *imposed* on man.'

The most central feature of a vocation is *not* that it is freely chosen, but rather that it is divinely given. It may come in an explicit, verbal fashion to a person walking along the Damascus Road, or it may come through the strong current of providential circumstances, channeled by God-given gifts and abilities, directed by the opening and closing of sluices of both divine and human origin, and bounded by the banks of God's revealed Word.

But the method matters little. The point is to understand the divine origin of the call and to answer it as if it truly is divine. In so doing, human freedom finds its expression not in libertarian acts of choosing but rather in worshipful submission to the divine will. And often, the connection between such works and the eschaton is not mediated by the objects of the work but rather by the persons of the work—the God who assigned it, the person who did it, and the people for whom it was done. Work's significance, both protologically and eschatologically, is deeply rooted in its relational element. Work given to man is a divine trust—work done for God is our act of worship.

Conclusion

Looming in the background of the discussions of both Niggle and Holland is

our understanding of the term 'duty'. Some concluding remarks on this topic would be in order. 'Duty' is a term that once was clearly used as a term of praise, often highest praise, for human conduct. In more recent years, its connotation has become dominated by a sense of irksomeness. Duty has always been *other* than one's free choice but it has not always been *contrary* to it. Choosing to do one's duty has often been counted a great and noble thing.

It seems, however, because of the enlightenment desire to do away with the shadows of God in our moral reasoning, and perhaps because of Kant's aptitude for accomplishing this desire, duty was stripped of a personal element and reduced to the product of arid and impersonal rational argument. Duty was abstracted from persons and disconnected from relationship. It became connected to raw authority—either the authority of rational thought or the authority of a person who, almost by definition, one did *not* have a relationship with—the king, the teacher, the civil authority.

The roots of biblical duty, however, are profoundly personal. They are almost always rooted in a covenant relationship, nourished by love, sustained by commitment, and expressed by meaningful work to accomplish a jointly shared purpose. In the biblical context, when God calls us to do something, it is our duty to do it because of the relationship in which we stand. We are bound to him in covenant and he is bound to us. Doing our duty is not merely an abstract response to authority but rather a way of sustaining and fulfilling a covenant relationship. Our work finds meaning, in this sense, neither protologically nor eschatologi-

cally but *relationally*. It expresses and nourishes a cherished relationship.

Niggle joins Holland in finding meaning in doing his duty. He is bound to Parish because he is his neighbor, and one has a duty toward one's neighbor. What is interesting in Tolkein's rendering of neighborly duty is that the relationship which was begun in the old creation by faithful works of duty is culminated in the new creation by an authentic bond of friendship. This friendship expresses itself in shared work for a common goal which ultimately created a place of healing in the new creation. In fact, it was such a good place of healing that the heavenly Voices which portray God in this story found it extremely useful for helping others.³⁶

In the new creation their shared labor served the common good. The story closes with a delightful anecdote in which the heavenly voices discuss the naming of this place, a naming which has become necessary because of its constant use by fellow heavenly travelers in need of a place to help complete their healing.

'I think we should give the region a name. What do you propose?'

'The Porter settled that some time ago,' said the second Voice. 'Train for Niggle's Parish by the bay: he has shouted that message for a long time now. Niggle's Parish. I sent a message to both of them to tell them.'

'What did they say?'

³⁶ Tolkein's eschatological transformation is gradual and phased, not sudden and comprehensive. Heaven involves a progressive healing.

'They both laughed. Laughed—the Mountains rang with it!'

Doing one's duty, properly understood, can be the celebration of a relationship. It need not be an arid task which serves only an instrumental purpose or no purpose at all. In fact, doing one's duty may one day bask in eschatological glory, having served the com-

mon good, having mediated the grace of God to others, and having bound one to God and to one's fellow workers in friendship and love. Faithfulness to protological duties is significant and meaningful merely by benefits accrued in the present world, though the seeds of our duties may also flower in the next.

With/Beyond Tracy: Re-visioning Public Theology

Timoteo D. Gener

KEYWORDS: *Culture, theological method, revised correlation, conversation, missiological, transformation, experience and reason.*

THIS STUDY EXPLORES David Tracy's approach to public theology with theology of culture as background to the topic.¹ More specifically, writing as a theologian from the Philippines, I seek to develop a basic understanding of 'public theology' for evangelical theological engagement in the country.²

1 I have explored Tracy's theology of culture in 'The Catholic Imagination in a Theology of Culture: A Conversation with David Tracy on Theology of Culture' (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Center for Advanced Theological Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, June 2003). For a summary of Tracy's theology, see Gaspar Martinez's *Confronting the Mystery of God: Political, Liberation, and Public Theologies* (New York, London: Continuum, 2001), 152-215.

2 Robert McElroy credits Martin Marty for coining the term 'public theology' in 1974. See McElroy, *The Search for an American Public Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 4. This emphasis on 'public theology' in classify-

Here I am presuming that Tracy serves as a vital conversation partner.³ For one, his revised correlational method envisions a full spectrum of dialogical possibilities in conversation with public culture. As such, it appears to be a useful method for mission and dialogue with culture and society.⁴ Incidentally,

ing theology *as such* would be an interesting subject worth exploring for a future study. One wonders why, for example, Calvin or Barth had *not* made a point of this.

3 Various theologians have approached his insights from diverse emphases: fundamental theology, systematics, hermeneutics and rhetorics, philosophy of religion [cf. John P. McCarthy, 'David Tracy' in *A New Handbook of Christian Theologians*, Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price (eds.) (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 468.] As an evangelical, I am interested in engaging his public theology from a 'missiological' angle.

4 Tracy's correlational model of doing theology has been a congenial partner to the practice of theological inculturation in the Philippines. See Jose de Mesa, *In Solidarity with the Culture* (Quezon City, Philippines: Maryhill School of Theology, 1987), 1-42, esp., 20-21, 40-41. See also Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991) 81-96; Lode Wostyn and Jose de Mesa, *Doing Theology* (Quezon City: Claretian, 1991).

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Tracy explicitly aligns his general method of correlation(s) with H. R. Niebuhr's model of cultural transformation.⁵ For another, Tracy is a pivotal theologian who takes seriously the question of the relationship between Christian faith and the public sphere.⁶

I will begin by discussing Tracy's notion of public theology, including its correlational methodology, theological bases, and social strategy. From a synchronic presentation, I will add a diachronic rendering of Tracy's theological journey. From here, I will move on to offer an appreciation (*with*) and critique of (*beyond*) Tracy's proposals.

I Tracy's Model of Public Theology: An Overview

Tracy has been writing about 'public theology' for about a quarter of a century now. He delineates the public character of theology in at least two ways: theology as public discourse and as revisionist/correlationist theology.

1. Theology as public discourse

Tracy maintains theology to be a *public form of discourse* or a *discipline informing public discourse* rooted in a radically monotheistic claim and affirmed within a modern, pluralistic (United States) setting. This pluralistic context con-

sists of at least three publics: society, academy, and church.⁷ The theocentric basis is critical to his understanding of theology's public role.

For theology dares to speak of all reality—persons, history, self, all—in relationship to the whole of reality. That whole is believed in... as God. And theology—precisely as *theologos*—attempts to speak this word about God in fidelity to the demands and the disciplines of the three publics, not one: of church, academy, and the wider society.⁸

Because of the very nature of fundamental questions it asks and because of the nature of the reality of God upon which theology reflects, theology must develop public, not private, criteria and discourse.⁹

Publicness is tied with pluralism in public life. The public realm involves the 'pluralism of cultural worlds' both external and internal. Theologians are not only dealing with 'several publics external to the self but to several internalized publics in one's own reflections on authentic existence.'¹⁰ Theology's public nature directly relates to theologians' public role as well as to the 'publics' (reference groups) to whom they speak.¹¹ Theology engages the

7 Tracy, *Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), xi; 'Theology as Public Discourse,' *The Christian Century*, March 1975, 280; 'The Role of Theology in Public Life: Some Reflections,' *Word & World* 4:3 (1984), 230-32.

8 Tracy, 'The Role of Theology in Public Life,' 231.

9 Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, xi.

10 Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 4.

11 Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 4.

5 Tracy, et al., 'Theological Reflection on Local Religious Leadership,' in *Parish, Priest, and People: New Leadership for the Local Church* (Chicago: Thomas More Press, 1981), 150-158.

6 For a summary of Tracy's theology as public theology, see Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God*, 152-215. See also Gener, 'The Catholic Imagination,' Chapters 2, 5.

claims of the three publics.¹²

Tracy further explains that theology 'speaks from and to three publics.' As public discourse, theology does not simply *speaks from* a social location; it also *speaks to* that location.¹³ It draws from a social locus as it shares a certain consensus about what counts as public discourse, what needs to be addressed, how claims are warranted and advanced. But it also names God, speaks of God, and addresses God's concerns to that location (and implicitly, to the other publics).

One finds Tracy, therefore, moving beyond a pluralistic description toward discernment to norm theological reflection. The following remark is typical: 'To affirm pluralism responsibly must include an affirmation of truth and public criteria for that affirmation.'¹⁴ This leads aptly to Tracy's notion of criteria.

In *Blessed Rage for Order*, Tracy identifies two major criteria for fundamental or public theology: (a) criteria of adequacy to human experience (or

alternatively, criteria of intelligibility or credibility) and (b) criteria of appropriateness for Christian texts (or Christian identity).¹⁵ The first grounds the meaningfulness, meaning, and truthfulness of cognitive claims in a philosophical reflection on lived experience or the self as self, 'mediated through various disciplines such as art, history, cultural analysis, human scientific analysis, and philosophical analysis.'¹⁶ This is a way of honoring the integrity of contemporary experience (of pluralism) in theological reflection.

The second criteria searches for an adequate theory of interpretation to 'show how (the theologians') present categories are appropriate understandings of the Christian understanding of existence.'¹⁷ This is determined by referring to the 'meanings involved either explicitly or implicitly in the significant texts, actions, gestures, and symbols of the entire Christian tradition.'¹⁸

More recently, in recognition of the post-modern situation, Tracy supple-

ments his previous proposal by submitting three sets of criteria: the hermeneutical notion of truth as manifestation, criteria of reasonable coherence, and the ethical-political criteria.¹⁹ In so doing, Tracy modifies his notion of transcendental (metaphysical) reflection proper to theological reflection. First, truth as manifestation (or what he calls the analogical imagination) remains the foundation of possibility for public conversation as well as for the method of correlation. Second, reasonable coherence means a 'more flexible but no less rational criteria for the rough coherence of what truths-as-manifestations we may hermeneutically learn from revelation with what we otherwise know as reasonable from science and all other uses of reason.'²⁰ Finally, the ethical-political criteria as pragmatics combine with the truth as manifestation (hermeneutic) to reflect the interrelation of theory and praxis, revelation and salvation.

Summing up, public theology strongly repudiates the notion that theology is simply a self-expression of the church's own self-understanding. Theology ought not to remain exclusively in the church. '[T]he church when faithful to its own self-understanding is not a sect.'²¹ It has responsibilities to the wider culture. Consequently, it belongs as much in a modern univer-

sity and in the wider culture and not simply within the churches.²²

2. Revisionist Theology

Public theology is also *revisionist theology* (or *revised* correlational theology) which in its three forms (fundamental, systematic, or practical), seeks to 'render public the resources of theology for the overlapping publics of the church, the academy, and distinct pastoral, cultural, and political praxis movements.'²³ Hence, to render its resources for public transformation through correlation and conversation is theology's distinct role in public life.

In assuming this role, its distinction lies in adding a third public from which it draws from and speaks to: not just the academy and the general culture, but also the church, understood as a community of moral and religious inquiry and commitment.²⁴ As a modern discipline, however, it speaks to the academy (as a discipline of liberal art) and, through its academic work, to the general culture as well.²⁵

Because of the prominence of conversation, public theology is correlational theology. In Tracy's words, 'a correlational model of theology seems

12 Here he combines the analyses of historians, as well as culture and sociological theorists like Martin Marty, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, Clifford Geertz, Stephen Toulmin, Gregory Baum, Van Harvey, and Jürgen Habermas (*Analogical Imagination*, xii, 1-6, 31-40)

13 E.g. Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, xi; 'The Role of Theology in Public Life,' 230.

14 Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, xi. In doing this, Tracy was, in effect, proposing some boundary-markers for doing theology in contemporary life. Cf. Gareth Jones who says that from a rhetorical point of view, Tracy's *Blessed Rage for Order* seeks to 'halt the 'postmodernist slide' [*Critical Theology: Questions of Truth and Method* (New York: Paragon House, 1995) 115.

15 Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975, 1996), 64-87; also 'On Reading the Scriptures Theologically,' in *Theology and Dialogue*. Bruce Marshall (ed.) (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 36-37.

16 Gerald M. Boodoo, *Development and Consolidation: The Use of Theological Method in the Works of David Tracy* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Faculty of Theology, 1991) 112.

17 Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 72; cited by Boodoo, *Development and Consolidation*, 114-115.

18 Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 72. cited by Boodoo, *Development and Consolidation*, 115.

19 Tracy, 'The Uneasy Alliance Reconceived: Catholic Theological Method, Modernity, and Postmodernity,' *Theological Studies* 50 (1989), 561.

20 Tracy, 'The Uneasy Alliance Reconceived,' 566.

21 Tracy, 'The Role of Theology in Public Life,' 230.

22 Tracy, 'The Role of Theology in Public Life,' 230.

23 Tracy, 'Revisionist Practical Theology and the Meaning of Public Discourse,' *Pastoral Psychology* 26 (1977), 83.

24 Tracy, 'The Role of Theology in Public Life,' 230.

25 Tracy, 'Afterword: Theology, Public Discourse, and the American Tradition,' in Michael J. Lacey, ed., *Religion and the Twentieth Century American Intellectual Life* (Cambridge University Press, 1989) 193-203.

the best available for an understanding of the possible function of theology in the public realm.²⁶ This model 'not merely allows but demands that theology enter into serious conversation with all others in the public realm.'²⁷ Theology in the correlational model involves

the attempt to establish, in both theory and practice, *mutually critical correlations* between two sets of interpretation: an interpretation of the Christian tradition and an interpretation of contemporary experience.²⁸

It is not correlation in the mode of Paul Tillich, which is a one-way movement from existential questions to Christian answers. Rather, it is a both-way, self-critical approach to theology. There are two principal sources for doing theology (the Christian tradition and contemporary experience) and the goal is to critically correlate them for transformative theory and practice. Mutual criticism and correction between Christian tradition and contemporary experience follows from the fact of finitude and contingency.²⁹ The

qualifier 'mutually critical' signals the self-critical theological stance, as well as the attendant risks involved in the interpretive process. Hence, Tracy insists that his method is a revised correlational method—a revised form of Tillich's correlation.³⁰

Correlational theology as public discourse allies with a *rhetorical model for theological discourse*.³¹ From this angle, one can say that Tracy employs reason rhetorically, that is, reason *as* communication. It follows that he is not concerned with theoretical certainty but rather, to advance the conversation with its many dialogue partners.³² Thus, Webb advances that correlation

Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks. Edited by Robert King and Peter Hodgson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982, 1985), 36).

30 For a different reading of Tillich's method, see Timoteo Gener, 'Transformational Correlation: A Reformational Perspective on Cultural Theological Method in Conversation with David Tracy's and Paul Tillich's Correlational Approach,' in *That the World May Believe: Essays on Mission and Unity in Honour of George Vandervelde*. M. Goheen and M. O'Gara (eds.) (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006) 29-43.

31 Most notably in Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987). Those who explicitly adopt a rhetorical theological model with affinities to Tracy's approach, include Stephen Webb, *Refiguring Theology: The Rhetoric of Karl Barth* (Albany: SUNY, 1991), and Don Compier, *What is Rhetorical Theology? Textual Practice and Public Discourse* (Harrisburg, PA: TPI, 1999).

32 Metaphysics and transcendental arguments receive a temporary, pragmatic usefulness. This rhetorical grounding has relevance to the charge of foundationalism in Tracy. See Webb, *Refiguring Theology*, 176-177, also 179 n.4.

26 Tracy, 'The Role of Theology in Public Life,' 234.

27 Tracy, 'The Role of Theology in Public Life,' 235.

28 Tracy, 'The Role of Theology in Public Life,' 235, my emphases.

29 'There is no innocent interpretation, no unambiguous tradition, no history-less, subject-less interpreter, no abstract, general situation, no method to guarantee certainty. There is only the risk of theological interpretation itself... and sharing that interpretation with the wider theological community for their criticism and their appropriation' (Tracy, 'Theological Method,' in *Christian Theology: An*

becomes (hermeneutical) conversation for Tracy, mainly 'rhetorical and not ontological, unpredictable and yet urgent,' and not dependent on a systematic philosophical framework.³³ In fact, Webb says, one can view Tracy's proposal as one that 'depends on a *tropical strategy of analogy* in rhetoric: both the similarity and the difference of the other must be recognized at the same time. From that recognition, true dialogical—mutually critical interaction—can take place.'³⁴

Correlation translates into conversation as a public strategy. The 'conversation' suggests that Christian theology does not have special prerogative to the recognition of truth. The classic manifestations of meaning and truth go beyond the confines of theology and the church.³⁵ This 'conversation' is an imperative for critical (social) collaboration and search for truth in the public realm.

3. Inner Theological Reasons

From scriptural grounds, how does Tracy support his model of public theology that emphasizes the intrinsic role of three publics (academy, church, society) in theological reflection? As we have seen, Tracy qualifies that the universalizing impetus of the Christian

message (that which drives theology to be truly public) ultimately resides in the nature of God as God as revealed in Jesus Christ, the God to whom Christians bear witness. From this Christian self-understanding, Tracy claims that faith in the 'all pervasive reality of God' disclosed in Jesus Christ leads to 'fundamental trust in and loyalty to the world in all its ambiguity' even to 'the church as... primary mediator of the gift of God in Christ.'³⁶

Ambiguity pertains to the mixture of good and evil, light and darkness, which does not exempt members of the church. In John's Gospel and the Johannine epistles, one discerns a Christian ambivalence in relating to the world expressed in both profound trust in and loyalty to the world that God created, and real distrust in that world expressed in denunciation, even flight from it.³⁷ It is amidst the radical contingency and ambiguity of all life that the Word *enables* and commands *work* for the world and the neighbor.³⁸ This Christological understanding is a key theme in Tracy's constructive proposals: Jesus as the Christ, 'the decisive Word-event of divine self-manifestation.'³⁹ The intrinsic connection between the manifestory christic vision and cultural valuation lies thickly on the nature of Jesus Christ as *Logos*, not just *Kerygma*.

33 Webb, *Refiguring Theology*, 177.

34 Webb, *Refiguring Theology*, 177.

35 Werner Jeanrond, 'Correlational Theology and the Chicago School,' *Introduction to Christian Theology: Contemporary North American Perspectives*. Edited by Roger Badham. (Louisville: WJKP, 1998), 142. Hence, Jeanrond's remarks: 'Only a public theology can be really correlational' (142)

36 Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 47, 49-50.

37 Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 48.

38 Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 48.

39 Tracy, 'A Theological View of Philosophy: Revelation and Reason,' in *The Question of Christian Philosophy Today*. Edited by F. J. Ambrosio (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 148.

4. Publicness and particularities

To open up the public realm for the resources of churches, Tracy invokes the need not only for argument but also conversation in shaping public life. In other words, for particular traditions to participate in public, the public realm has to be reconfigured to include both argument and conversation.⁴⁰ This bears the notion that publicness is inherently dialogical, grounded in the notion that human action is 'intrinsically interactive and communicative.'⁴¹

Here Tracy substantially adopts Habermas' general criteria for argument for publicness: 'criteria of intelligibility (coherence), truth (warrants-evidence), right (moral integrity) and equality (mutual reciprocity).'⁴² But Tracy insists argument should be complemented by, if not subsumed under, the model of (hermeneutic) conversation. Thus Tracy reconfigures Habermas' criteria as 'de facto conditions of possibility for the presence or absence of both argument and conversation.'⁴³

It follows that conversation with the religious classics of culture does not mean abandoning the general criteria for publicness. It does mean that prevailing selective (technicized, instrumental) rationality of Western culture has to be abandoned in favor of 'a more

comprehensive notion of reason... and thereby of religion's own relationship to that more comprehensive role.'⁴⁴ This comprehensive notion of reason, allied with the criteria for genuine conversation, Tracy finds congenial to appreciating the disclosive and transformative truths of concrete classics of art and religion.⁴⁵

Precisely as conversation, the interaction between reference groups is shared, shareable, public. Precisely as the result of conversation, the disclosure-transformation is a public candidate for possible consensus in the public realm.⁴⁶ Contrary to narrativist and postliberal focus on Christian identity, it is the effect that remains public, not the origin of the Christian classics. These (culture-transforming) effects are a distillation of the disclosive and transformative shareable possibilities, which comes through conversation. In this regard, every classic needs continuing conversation by the wider community constituted by its effects.⁴⁷

II. Public Theology, Modernity, Postmodernity: Tracy's Theological Journey, Self-Criticisms

Here we present Tracy's account of his theological journey. We contrast this section as diachronic (historical) compared to the preceding synchronic (thematic) account. The succeeding sections following this account point

⁴⁰ Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 123.

⁴¹ Tracy, 'Public Theology, Hope, and the Mass Media: Can the Muses Still Inspire?' in *God and Globalization Volume 1*, Edited by Max Stackhouse (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 235.

⁴² Tracy, 'Public Theology, Hope, and the Mass Media', 235.

⁴³ Tracy, 'Public Theology, Hope, and the Mass Media', 235.

⁴⁴ Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 120.

⁴⁵ Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 123.

⁴⁶ Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 124.

⁴⁷ Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 125.

toward an evangelical appreciation and critique of his theology.

As a dialogical theologian, Tracy's thinking has evolved and is evolving through continuing conversations.⁴⁸ Consider the following retrospective remarks, which summarize in a self-critical way the thrust of his major publications.

Blessed Rage for Order is straightforwardly modern theology, with much I would wish to defend, especially things like the reflections on limit language and the demand for publicness of theology. However, I now see not only the weaknesses of some of my own formulations in *Blessed Rage for Order*, but of the modern project itself, of which that book is representative. I already had certain hesitations when I started *The Analogical Imagination*. That is why I developed the notion of the classic, which is the major innovation in the first part of that book. So in a sense the turn there, more than in *Blessed Rage for Order*, is to a *hermeneutical* understanding of theology. Hermeneutics is in *Blessed Rage*, but only as part of this larger modern project. As in *The Analogical Imagination* hermeneutics *becomes* the project,

especially for systematic theology. The reason I wrote *Plurality and Ambiguity* is simply because the sense of both plurality and of ambiguity, namely, the sense of postmodernity, became even stronger for me, and I felt obliged, ethically almost, to try to clarify that for myself in relationship to what remains a fundamentally hermeneutical theology. And then *Dialogue with the Other* is an attempt to say that what is called for now is the relationship to the other and the different.⁴⁹

For Tracy, modernity has made 'great strides' which still needs defending but it has also 'grave defects' which were not sufficiently reflected in his earlier work, *Blessed Rage for Order* (henceforth, *BRO*).⁵⁰ He distinguishes the 'straightforwardly modern theology' of *BRO* from the 'fundamentally hermeneutical theology' started in *Analogical Imagination* (henceforth, *AI*). Hermeneutics is present in *BRO* but subsumed in the modern project. In *AI* hermeneutics (or hermeneutical theology) becomes the project, not modern theology. His succeeding works after *AI* draw from the 'sense of postmodernity' but his perspective remains fundamentally hermeneutical.⁵¹

⁴⁸ On this see Todd Breyfogle, Thomas Levergood, 'Conversation with David Tracy,' *Cross Currents* 44 (Fall, 1994), 293-94, 301. See also Tracy, 'On Reading the Scriptures Theologically,' 35-68, esp., 58-60; 'The Uneasy Alliance Reconciled, 548-570; 'God, Dialogue, and Solidarity: A Theologian's Refrain,' *How My Mind Has Changed*, edited by James M. Wall & David Heim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

⁴⁹ Breyfogle and Levergood, 'Conversation with David Tracy,' 301.

⁵⁰ One of these defects not reflected in *BRO* entail 'the separation between theory and practice, and in the case of theology, between theological theories and spiritual practices' (Breyfogle and Levergood, 'Conversation with David Tracy,' 294).

⁵¹ See Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God*, 178.

What in modernity needs 'defense' and what are its 'grave defects'? First, Tracy articulates a basic summary and defense of what he calls 'modern truths.'

The truth, indeed (as earlier secularization theologies were not wrong to argue) the theological truth of modernity, still needs defense, including theological defense. For beyond a discredited myth of progress and against a wholesale Weberian pessimism lie the *modern truths* which Habermas and many other moderns have striven to defend: the reality of reason as communication; the hopes alive in all the new countermovements to a dominant techno-economic realm; the drive to a Jamesian cultural pluralism and a genuine political democracy undivorced from economic democracy. The liberating power of all that is occurring in the Eastern and Central Europe and elsewhere shows the power of that drive to modern democracy and pluralism.⁵²

Notice especially Tracy's carefully worded claim about the reality of reason: it is reason as communication. As we have seen above, this points to the (often neglected) role of the rhetorical (hermeneutical) model in Tracy's theology.⁵³ Apparently for him, as suc-

ceeding sections would show, this seems related to the valuing of comprehensive reason in shaping public life.

Strongly dialogical in his thinking, Tracy very rarely lays down what he rejects.⁵⁴ But these denunciations can be found in his recent identification of modernity's fatal defects. Tracy calls attention to three great separations of modern Western culture: '(1) the separation of feeling and thought; (2) the separation of form and content; and (3) the separation of theory and practice.'⁵⁵ All these are peculiarly *modern* divisions especially considering the difference in the outlook of the ancients and the medievals. What originally were helpful distinctions in pre-modernity became in modernity unbridgeable separations.⁵⁶ These separations lead Tracy to doubt whether *Western* modernity, with its techno-economic culture and impoverished notion of reason, can heal itself.⁵⁷

In the following major section, we will probe if Tracy's public theological project is still vulnerable to the 'separations,' which he rejects. But it would be wise first to recall what evangelicals could learn from him toward a public theology in this new millennium.

52 Tracy, 'Literary Theory and Return of the Forms for Naming and Thinking God in Theology,' *Journal of Religion* (1994), 304.

53 Aside from Webb, *Refiguring Theology*, 176-77; see also Don Compier, *What is Rhetorical Theology?*. Among others, the Yale postliberals (Lindbeck, Frei, Placher) often miss this in their evaluation and criticism of Tracy.

54 William Placher recognizes this disposition as an asset and a liability, *Unapologetic Theology* (Louisville, KY: W/KJP, 1989), 155.

55 Tracy, 'Traditions of Spiritual Practice and the Practice of Theology,' *Theology Today* 55 (Jl 1998): 235.

56 Tracy, 'Traditions of Spiritual Practice', 235-236.

57 Tracy, 'Literary Theory and Return of the Forms,' 304-5.

III. A Reformational Evangelical Response

With very few exceptions, evangelical interaction with Tracy's (and Tillich's) correlational theology has often been indirect.⁵⁸ What I attempt to do here is provide a personal assessment of Tracy's public theology from a Reformational evangelical standpoint.⁵⁹

1. With Tracy.

I note my own evangelical appreciation of Tracy in relation to public theology.

a) Key Concepts.

Crucial to Tracy's presentation are key terms that could serve as handles or building blocks for a foundational, even an ecumenical, public theology. It is not surprising then that Reformed ethicist Max Stackhouse relies on Tracy's language and concepts in advancing a basic understanding of public theology.⁶⁰ The key concepts

58 Cf. Ray Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001) Chapters 2-4. Here Anderson dialogues with Don Browning whose revised correlational method in practical theology heavily borrows from Tracy. Also, Orlando Costas' hermeneutical proposals in *Liberating News* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989); and Clark Pinnock's *Tracking the Maze* (New York: Harper and Row, 1991).

59 The Reformational stance is a sub-tradition within the Reformed faith. It is a Reformed strain associated with the Dutch Calvinism of Abraham Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd, and others like Al Wolters, Richard Mouw and Nicholas Wolterstorff.

60 Max Stackhouse, 'Public Theology and Ethical Judgment,' *Theology Today* 54 (July 1997) 165-79.

include theology as public discourse, God in public, religion, plurality and ambiguity, correlation, conversation, rhetoric, which are discussed in the context of modern and postmodern cultural shifts.

To keep the practical balance between the kerygmatic and the apologetic, or the creational/doxological with the diaconic dimensions of the faith, evangelicals would do well to wrestle with these concepts: to deal with them as talking points, to work around them or to reconfigure them.⁶¹ I have some difficulty with Tracy's proposals, as the next section would describe. As an evangelical, I would prefer to add to Tracy's cluster of key terms: the centrality of mission, Scripture, the Church and its practices.⁶² But overall, we are indebted to Tracy for having opened a new field of theological reflection for conversation and deepening.

b) A Critical Social Perspective.

Tracy challenges us in a fundamental way to think Christianly about pluralism and public life. Nowadays, it is more or less established that social differentiation is integral to the reality of

61 Cf. Don Browning's suggestion that Tracy's critical correlational approach 'combines the best of the cultural-linguistic and the apologetic approaches' (*A Fundamental Practical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991) 45).

62 To put it another way, theological method should be about biblical (missional) discernment within a consciously Trinitarian frame of reference.

pluralism.⁶³ Yet more than two decades ago, Tracy was already alerting theologians to engage this societal differentiation more consciously as public theological agenda.⁶⁴ The different publics address and elicit different theological orientations and interests. Tracy's insights on theology and its 'publics' engage this facet of contemporary public life.

More foundationally, Tracy has signaled the need for social theory in theological engagement.⁶⁵ I find intriguing parallels to this need for critical social perspective among evangelical theologians. Evangelical Calvinist philosophers Richard Mouw and Sander Griffioen have called on evangelicals to engage the fact of pluralism(s) with a particular Christian social theory.⁶⁶

c) Reconceiving Theology.

In an increasingly pluralistic and highly differentiated public culture, how does one view what is theological?

63 Michael Welker, "Is Theology in Public Discourse Possible Outside Communities of Faith?" in *Religion, Pluralism, and Public Life: Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for the Twenty-First Century*. Edited by Luis Lugo (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 119.

64 Neo-Calvinist philosopher and theologian of an earlier generation, Abraham Kuyper was a towering figure who has also reflected deeply on these questions. For a brief introduction on Kuyper, with recommended readings, see Richard Mouw, 'Abraham Kuyper: A Man for This Season,' *Christianity Today*, October 26, 1998.

65 Tracy, 'Public Theology, Hope, and the Mass Media,' 235

66 Richard Mouw and Sander Griffioen, *Pluralism & Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

As a definition that engages 'plurality and ambiguity' both in the churches and the wider society, Tracy advances the idea that theology articulates 'mutually critical correlations between the meaning and truth of an interpretation of the Christian fact and the meaning and truth of an interpretation of the contemporary situation.'⁶⁷ As we have seen, this is grounded in the co-affirmation of church and world in God's creation. Strongly dialogical and calling for active solidarity with the oppressed, Tracy also wishes to dissociate his approach from theological elitism: 'the belief that only a learned elite can read these [religious] texts properly.'⁶⁸

Evangelicals do not seem to have much of a problem warding off a kind of pernicious elitism, but co-affirming the church and world as a theological stance is theologically suspect. There is however, a recurring dissatisfaction with unidirectional theologies as in the following imploration from Nicholas Wolterstorff.

I am all for Church Theology. But is the relation of the Church theologian to the non-theological disciplines exclusively that of melting down gold taken from the Egyptians? Isn't some of the statuary of the Egyptians quite as OK as it is? Does it all reek of idolatry? Isn't there something for the Church theologian to learn from the

67 Tracy, 'The Foundations of Practical Theology,' in *Practical Theology: The Emerging Field in Theology, Church, and World*. Don Browning (ed.) (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 62.

68 Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity*, 104.

non-theological disciplines? So too for the biblical scholars of the Church... They interpret their Bibles so that Christian fidelity does not require joining the Flat Earth Society. So it is misleading to use exclusively one-directional metaphors. It's true that, instead of making the world of the Bible fit into our world, we ought to fit our world into its world. But in some respects, even in many respects; not all.⁶⁹

2. Difficulties.

I note two primary areas of difficulties I have with Tracy's theology: its experiential foundationalism and its understanding of the public realm as the realm of reason. Both are actually variations on a single theme: theology as a public discourse.

a) Theology, Experience and Tradition.

To structuralize the co-affirmation of the church and the world in theological method and to preclude unilateral interpretations, Tracy proposes the bipolar, dialectical relationship between experience and tradition. Human experience serves as an independent theological source, distinct from the 'inner-theological' demands of tradition.⁷⁰ Both sources (experience

and tradition) differ in their own distinctive criteria and modes of analysis. For Tracy, mutually correlating these bipolar sources leads to relatively adequate theology in the polis.

Tracy's understanding of two *polar* sources, two *poles* of experience and tradition leads to major difficulties. First, while Tracy clarifies the 'full spectrum of possibilities' allowed in his method of correlation,⁷¹ it is noticeable that his structural polarity leads to a hermeneutical imbalance. It tilts toward human experience. "Direct' experience, the 'realized' experience, the 'immediate experience of the self as self,' the 'primordial experience of the self,' all encounter a fundamental dimension of basic faith which serves as the requisite foundation for any subsequent interpretations. Accordingly every religious expression assumes this experiential dimension and proceeds from it."⁷²

emy of Religion LXI/4 (1993) 684ff. As Stell creatively points out, on *this* point Tracy stands on similar footing with George Lindbeck. (679-703).

71 Tracy, 'Foundations of Practical Theology,' 63 (my emphases): It ranges 'from claims of *identity* (between meaning and truth of the Christian fact and the contemporary situation) through claims for *similarities-in-difference* (*analogies*) or complementarities to claims of *pure confrontation* or non-identity. Any option is logically possible in principle.'

72 Stell, 'Hermeneutics in Theology and the Theology of Hermeneutics,' 684-5. Cf. *Blessed Rage for Order*, 103: 'We misunderstand the function of religious language if we claim that it causes (presents) our general confidence or trust in the meaningfulness of existence. We understand such language correctly only when we recognize that the use of religious language is an effect (a re-presentation) of an already present basic confidence or trust.'

69 Nicholas Wolterstorff, *What New Haven and Grand Rapids Have to Say to Each Other* (Grand Rapids: Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, 1993) 45-46.

70 Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 44-5; The Analogical Imagination, 88. Cf. Stephen Stell, 'Hermeneutics in Theology and the Theology of Hermeneutics,' *Journal of the American Acad-*

Secondly, and related to the first, the assumed polarity of sources corresponds to a similar structuring of substantive issues. The specificities (thickness) of religious belief are assumed to be developed by conscious reflection upon pre-theoretical, inexpressible experience.⁷³ For instance, in cognitively re-presenting these experiences, Tracy 'employs language like 'liberation,' 'emancipation,' 'wholeness,' 'salvation,' to articulate the conviction elicited and empowered by that experience itself.⁷⁴ These experiential terms, however, are not abstract as they receive their concreteness from a tradition with its particular historical events, experiences, and personages.⁷⁵

It leads us then to say that Tracy's framework resort to the valuing (and borrowing) of non-religious criteria ('public modes of argument' in fundamental theology) over against the public appeal of systematic theology.⁷⁶ It is the modes of argument of fundamental theology (not systematic theology) that seek 'to provide arguments that all reasonable persons whether 'religiously involved' or not, can recognize

as reasonable.⁷⁷ In effect, Tracy, identifies genuine publicness with general philosophical argument, thereby 'undercut[ing] the ability of Christians to employ the specific resources of their traditions to engage in public conversations.'⁷⁸ Along similar lines, if both theological sources are deemed equal, as Tracy seems to suggest, 'this may lead to the attenuation of theology's own recourse, God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ.'⁷⁹

One sees, therefore, a flattening or homogenizing of Christian specificity in public discourse. This is noticeable even in Tracy's other definition of theology as 'interpretation of religion.'⁸⁰ The same can be said with his non-religious (supposedly universal or thin) notion of 'public(s).' It is homogenizing, as it has not allowed the particularities of ecclesial communities and the academic community to clear expression over against the media and other publics.⁸¹ Also, limiting the publics to three 'does not sufficiently illuminate either theology's relations to other 'societal subsystems,' such as education, the family, and the judicial system or the effects of the market and media subsystems on academic theology, the church, and other subsystems and publics.'⁸²

⁷⁷ Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 57.

⁷⁸ Ronald Thiemann, *Constructing a Public Theology* (Westminster: WKJP, 1991), 21.

⁷⁹ Hans Schwarz, *Method and Context as Problems for Contemporary Theology* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 26.

⁸⁰ Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity*, 85.

⁸¹ Welker, 'Is Theology in Public Discourse Possible Outside Communities of Faith?' 119.

⁸² Welker, 'Is Theology in Public Discourse Possible Outside Communities of Faith?' 119.

⁷³ This inexpressible experience being 'the eruption of a power become self-manifestation from and by the whole' (*The Analogical Imagination*, 685). Cf. quoted in Stell, 'Hermeneutics in Theology...' 685.

⁷⁴ Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 173; quoted in Stell, 'Hermeneutics in Theology...' 685.

⁷⁵ Stell, 'Hermeneutics in Theology...' 685

⁷⁶ Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, 'The Relation Between Fundamental and Systematic Theology,' *Irish Theological Quarterly* (1996) 142-144; also Linell Cady, *Religion, Theology and American Public Life* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1993), 33-37.

b) Comprehensive Reason, Pluralism and the Public Realm.

It is intriguing that in spite of his strong awareness of plurality and ambiguity, Tracy still looks to shared rationality as the solution to the extravagance of pluralism. Using Habermas' critical social analyses, he believes in retrieving comprehensive reason (as opposed to selective, instrumental rationality) to revitalize theology and public life. Underlying this is Tracy's assumption that public life is the realm of reason and (public) theological discourse has to rely on public meaning to contribute to a shared rational consensus. Tracy takes for granted that the means of assessing universal claims should be through public modern criteria for argument and conversation. Indeed, the global statement that all theology is public discourse 'depends on what he refers to as the ordinary or normal meaning of public, namely, that it appeals to all people on grounds that any reasonable person would accept.'⁸³ Henceforth,

[i]n any and every case, the fundamental ethical commitment of the theologian *qua* theologian remains to that community of scientific inquiry whose province logically includes whatever issue is under investigation.⁸⁴

Even if the later Tracy (especially of *Plurality and Ambiguity*) names the present as postmodern not late-modern

(contra Habermas),⁸⁵ he has not softened his appeal to a universal public. By appealing to a (universal) public discourse (with Habermas), Tracy grounds Christianity in the broader traditions of Western culture.⁸⁶ In this way, this universal public assumes a public realm of commonly held assumptions.⁸⁷ Consistent with such direction, Tracy accords primary status to human rationality as a categorical tribunal, which adjudicates the claims of both experience (Culture) and tradition (Faith).⁸⁸ What tends to be ignored, however, is how potentially stifling this (over)reliance on reason is to a pluralistic conversation. As Richard Bernstein notes,

It is the appeal to something like the idea of rational consensus that has always been used to block, stifle, or rule out 'revolutionary' turns in the conversation. To speak of the argumentative redemption of validity claims through the appropriate level of discourse is either poten-

⁸⁵ Tracy, *On Naming the Present: God, Hermeneutics, and Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis; London: SCM, 1994).

⁸⁶ Tracy, 'Theology, Critical Social Theory, and the Public Realm,' in *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology*. Edited by Don S. Browning and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1992) 19; cf. Owen Thomas, 'Public Theology and Counter-Public Spheres,' 461-62; also William Placher, 'Revisionist and Postliberal Theologies,' 411-12.

⁸⁷ Tracy, 'Theology, Critical Social Theory, and the Public Realm,' 19.

⁸⁸ cf. Frans Josef van Beeck, *God Encountered: A Contemporary Catholic Systematic Theology*, Volume 2/1 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1989) 270.

⁸³ Owen C. Thomas, 'Public Theology and Counter-Public Spheres,' *Harvard Theological Review*, 85:4 (1992) 456.

⁸⁴ Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 7.

tially stifling or sheer bluff.⁸⁹

In a way, Tracy's appeal to publicness can lead to unilateral movement in conversation, as it tends to deflect any effective cultural critique that might be made by Christian faith and theology. Thus, speaking of Tracy's fundamental criticism of liberation theology as uncritically supernaturalist and neoorthodox on the basis of (an assumed) shared commitment toward 'a basic secular faith,'⁹⁰ Christine Gudorf asserts

The problem with Tracy's 'basic secular faith' is precisely that it is not 'shared by all those committed to the contemporary struggle for liberation.... For Tracy, this western European intellectual tradition is normative... Yet much of the world, including most Latin Americans, has never experienced the Enlightenment or significant degrees of secularity. Tracy writes of judging and evaluating pluralism, but his perspective on the contemporary situation ignores the majority of the world.⁹¹

Theologies from the Majority World pose a major challenge to 'shared, rational consensus.' But this challenge is not just from the field of Christian theology. Recent social science tends

to confirm Bernstein's claim against such a consensus. According to recent historical studies, advanced bureaucracies of the late capitalist modern state fail to function for the well being of various groups. On the contrary, various oppositional, counter-public spheres have emerged in response to the failure of the late capitalist, welfare state. This development of oppositional public spheres is neither a matter of Habermas' idea of the formation of 'deception-free consensuses through rational speech,' nor a matter of mass movement of the dispossessed. These autonomous mass movements are actually the ones who institute a plurality of public spheres, signaling 'the emergence of a new political theme under the late capitalist, welfare state conditions.'⁹² By upholding Habermas as *the* social theorist of the public sphere,⁹³ Tracy tends toward a homogenizing notion of the public that may vitiate his concern not to overlook the voices of excluded others, including those who are (unavoidable) victims of modern public discourses.⁹⁴

III. Beyond Tracy: Transformationist Public Theology

In what follows I will sketch elements

⁸⁹ Richard Bernstein, *Philosophical Profiles: Essays in a Pragmatic Mode* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986) 80, quoted by Owen Thomas 'Public Theology and Counter-Public Spheres,' 463.

⁹⁰ The reference is to *Blessed Rage for Order*, 245.

⁹¹ Christine Gudorf, 'Liberation Theology's Use of Scripture: A Response to First World Critics,' *Interpretation* 1987 (January), 13.

⁹² John Keane, *Public Life and Late Capitalism: Toward a Socialist Theory of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 29, quoted by Thomas, 'Public Theology and Counter-Public Spheres,' 460.

⁹³ Tracy, 'Public Theology, Hope and the Mass Media,' 232-33.

⁹⁴ This suggests a conflict as he tries to hold together Habermas and Foucault's social insights with less kerygmatic-theological intention, see Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity*, 79.

of a culture-transforming public theology that appropriates Tracy's key insights. This facilitates a reorientation of Tracy's hermeneutical theology toward the concrete urgency and challenge of the gospel and culture encounter.⁹⁵ In a way this accords with the pioneering notion of public theology by Martin Marty and reiterated by Roman Catholic theologian Robert McElroy: 'a self-consciously religious effort to form and mold American culture and politics so that they conform more fully with God's plan of salvation.'⁹⁶

First, taking the cue from Tracy, I intend to elaborate on a theology of public life configured missiologically. This combines a biblical theology of public culture supported with a social theory that recognizes the fact of differentiation. Second, I will outline a theological method that reconfigures the apologetic function of correlation, within a Trinitarian understanding of theology and ministry. Finally, I will build on Tracy's claim that theology is possible outside of the churches' domain. This insight is critical to enable the church to fruitfully engage culture in an ongoing mission and dialogue.

1. Culture-Transforming Theology of Public Life.

When Tracy aligned his theological method with Niebuhr's 'Christ and culture' models, affirming especially the

transformational stance, he was in effect venturing into a theology of culture. Consequently, echoing Niebuhr, he imagines a variety of 'dialogical possibilities' between Christian faith and secular culture: the continuum ranging from identity to confrontation. But Tracy does not explicitly link public theology with theology of culture. Instead, for him, fundamental theology is intentionally public theology.⁹⁷ Here we discern a secularistic bias in Tracy, one that Christine Gudorf (among others) has previously identified and rightly criticized.⁹⁸

Moving beyond Tracy, instead of situating public theology within fundamental theology, it seems more fruitful to view public theology as a theology of American culture viewed transformationally. And in terms of orienting framework, one could view theology of public culture as a moment within missiology: the study of the Christian movement, of the missionary activity of the church in all its dimensions, in different times and places.⁹⁹ The interpretive framework for this missiology does not rely on criteria determined by

⁹⁷ Stell, *Hermeneutics and the Holy Spirit*, 216.

⁹⁸ Gudorf, 'Liberation Theology's Use of Scripture,' 13. Peter Berger, in an earlier essay, airs a similar criticism, see 'Secular Theology and the Rejection of the Supernatural: Reflections on Recent Trends,' *Theological Studies* 38 (1977) 39-56.

⁹⁹ *Lecture Notes: Introduction to Missiology*, Maryhill School of Theology, Quezon City, Philippines, 1993. In relation to the rest of theology, missiology promotes a missionary theology, or a reordering of the whole of theology to be more missionary in its outlook and concerns.

⁹⁵ Lee Moonjang, 'Reconfiguring Western Theology in Asia,' *Trinity Theological Journal* 10 (2002): 37-38.

⁹⁶ McElroy, *The Search for an American Public Theology*, 4.

a secular interpretive context but rather by a transformational theological base: God as creator, reconciler and redeemer of all things.

This does not mean, however, a one-way movement of influence or even a polarized relationship between Christian faith and modern themes. Rather, both are engaged in a relationship of reciprocity. I like the way Jacob Klapwijk refers to this two-way influence, preferring to call it *reciprocity of transformation* but still upholding the primacy of Scriptural authority for all of life.

[There are two ways this relationship is expressed:

(a) in virtue of the *religious principle inherent in the Christian faith* it is possible to develop Christian philosophical perspectives and insights, an activity in which insights (originating in philosophy generally) are appropriated, critically reinterpreted, and integrated in the Christian view;

(b) *the philosophical tradition at large, in turn, also harbors the potential to detach concepts from the Christian philosophical heritage, to reinterpret them, and to put them to use in an opposed religious (or ideological) way of thinking.*¹⁰⁰

Klapwijk invokes critical discern-

ment to arrive at transformational quality.^{101]}

I will link this later on with a transformational correlational approach that moves beyond Tracy.

Beginning with a vision of human unity based on creation, public life can be viewed as 'pre-political.' Seen in this way, public life 'is more basic than politics; it existed long before political institutions were developed and refined.'¹⁰² In a very cosmopolitan era, however, a creational underpinning for public culture might also avail itself of 'an understanding of society as comprising institutions that have their inner coherence and integrity before the sovereign Creator.'¹⁰³ This also harks back to the biblical idea of creation or more precisely, of created diversity.¹⁰⁴ From a creational perspective, culture is woven into the original creation expressed in various manifestations of human cultural activity: familial, economic, recreational, ecclesial, and political.¹⁰⁵ To put this in Christian philosophical terms, creation has several 'parts,' 'modes' or 'spheres,' and understanding them may help us to arrive at moral discern-

101 Klapwijk, 'Epilogue: The Idea of Transformational Philosophy,' 249.

102 Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers* (New York: Crossroad, 1981, 1991) 23.

103 Elaine Storkey, 'Sphere Sovereignty and the Anglo-American Tradition' in *Religion, Pluralism and Public Life*, 203. See also, Henry R. Van Til, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959, 1972, 2001).

104 Mouw, 'Some Reflections on Sphere Sovereignty' 104.

105 Mouw, 'Some Reflections on Sphere Sovereignty' 104.

100 Jacob Klapwijk, 'Epilogue: The Idea of Transformational Philosophy,' in *Bringing Captivity into Every Thought: Capita Selecta in the History of Christian Evaluations of Non-Christian Philosophy*. Jacob Klapwijk, Sander Griffioen and Gerben Groenewoud (eds.) (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 262.

ment in navigating the complexities of cultural life.¹⁰⁶

Interestingly, this particular angle may enliven public theology because of its attention to a historical/creational unfolding of differentiated publics and plural theologies on the road toward a fuller understanding of the good news of God's reign in societies and cultures. This implies that we should be affirming, not a singular, monologic public theology but rather (potentially, at least) a variety of transformational public theologies as well theology of various publics. Reference to the singular (public theology), however, remains useful especially in identifying a specific view or motivation (here I take to be missiological) for the work of theology.¹⁰⁷

In an amazing way, the Scriptures portray the Spirit of God as the agent of redeeming creation from human sinfulness, 'working to effect a special kind of unity and concord.' The classical biblical texts include Genesis 1, Joel 3:1-5, Luke 4: 16ff, Acts 2. The Spirit works to realize a 'differentiated unity of the creaturely, a differentiated unity of the people of God, as well as a differentiated knowledge of God.'¹⁰⁸ In the

outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, 'a differentiated, differentiation-protecting experience of community is established' without dissolving or suspending the different languages, loyalties and historical customs of peoples.¹⁰⁹ As the messianic bearer of the Spirit, Jesus brings to Israel and to all peoples justice, compassion, and the knowledge of God. In the process, he will bring the universal fulfillment of the law, the establishment of the righteousness intended by God, in the city of God. The paradox of the Gospel, however, is that it is through the cross and resurrection that the Spirit of God will realize the righteousness that God commissions in the world.¹¹⁰

2. Theology beyond the churches.

Viewed missiologically, Tracy's insistence that theology is a public discourse or his insight that theology goes beyond the confines of the Christian churches is crucial. It calls Christians to the public role of churches as well as the public dimensions of Christian theology. For Tracy, this involves willingness to dialogue with modern Western culture, which is not simply a matter of Christian obligation. The imperative assumes the indicative, which include the gracious reality (of God in public) as well as the mutuality of relationship between Christianity and modernity.

Tracy, however, privileges academic theology in revitalizing public life.

106 Mouw, 'Some Reflections on Sphere Sovereignty,' 104.

107 Max Stackhouse's view of public theology, comes closest to what I envision as a missiological public theology, even though he never mentions the term missiology or missiological. See his recent, 'Public Theology and Ethical Judgment,' *Theology Today* 54 (July 1997), 167-8.

108 Michael Welker, '... And Also Upon the Menservants and the Maidservants in Those Days Will I Pour Out My Spirit: On Pluralism and the Promise of the Spirit,' *Soundings* 78 (1995): 58.

109 Welker, 'And Also Upon the Menservants and the Maidservants,' 60.

110 Welker, 'And Also Upon the Menservants and the Maidservants,' 62.

This is where we want to move beyond his contributions. What we need is a basic re-visioning of theology that structuralizes reciprocity of transformation, where mission and dialogue are intrinsically interrelated, but one whose criteria will not be dependent on a secular interpretive context (e.g. religious studies, philosophy).¹¹¹ I will now develop this more fully to conclude my presentation.

3. Transforming Correlations.

Tracy's hermeneutic does not fully deliver what it seeks to achieve: reciprocal transformation signaled by mutual criticism and correlations. Human experience serves as the ultimate grounding of religious language (and thus, of any Christian theology). Thus, Christian discourse loses its thickness and particularity (God's action in Christ) in the correlation. This cultural pull also shows itself in Tracy's valuation of human rationality as the categorical tribunal, which adjudicates the claims of the two sources. It is however a rationality that appeals to a consensus-based loyalty to the morality of scientific knowledge. This accommodationist drift may also be seen in the way Tracy puts action as secondary to meaning in the order of hermeneutical reflection.

In this, Tracy's work as a whole is vulnerable to the liberationist criticism that he is one with western liberals in seeing the religious question as cognitive (the crisis of cognitive claims), or the question of the (secular) non-

believer. 'All other questions—justice, liturgy, discipleship—have to be understood through this modern crisis of secularistic nonbelief.'¹¹² Misunderstanding, not suffering, is the primary problem demanding a solution.¹¹³

From a missiological point of view then, one wonders if Tracy's theological method truly bolsters a biblical prophetic vision or undercuts it. We pose this question because, at a foundational level, to speak Christianly (that is, biblically), the practice of theology finds itself intrinsically connected with Christ's continuing ministry through the Holy Spirit in the world.¹¹⁴ The route to the universal is through the particularity of Christian revelation. To pursue this prophetic lead and avoid uncritical synthesis with culture (western or otherwise), I suggest reconfiguring the correlation by upholding Scripture as the primary source (Scripture) for Christian theology but with two secondary sources alongside it (tradition and experience).¹¹⁵ There is an evangelical suspicion at work here.

¹¹² Rebecca Chopp, 'Practical Theology and Liberation,' in *Formation and Reflection*. Edited by Lewis Mudge and James Poling (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 127.

¹¹³ Compier, *What is Rhetorical Theology?*, 19.

¹¹⁴ Ray Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001).

¹¹⁵ Costas, *Liberating News*, 151. Costas viewed reason not as a source but rather, a medium by which Christians process (evaluate, clarify, receive) the claims of Scripture, tradition (church), and experience. See also Michael Nazir-Ali, 'Culture, Conversation, and Conversion,' *AD 2000 and Beyond: A Mission Agenda*. Chris Sugden and Vinay Samuel (eds.) (Oxford: Regnum, 1991) 34.

¹¹¹ As I see it, this is where Tracy finds its fundamental justification for his criteria for revised correlation.

The difference between the classical/evangelical paradigm of correlation and the revised correlation paradigm seems finally to rest on a difference in the doctrine of revelation. If there is absolute mutuality of criticism, then there is parity of disclosure. If parity, then the priority of special revelation (Christ-event) is denied. How can this denial not mean an inordinate trust in the general state of human experience and wisdom, and a corresponding diminution of the unique deeds and disclosures of God?¹¹⁶

Correlation should flow from, and be corroborated by, biblical-theological interrelation. Thus, to make sense of non-Christian insights in terms of a Christian perspective (*pace* Klapwijk), correlation has to be discerned through a process of *rereading* (and reenacting) of the Scripture as God's people.¹¹⁷ Another way to put it is this: while the contemporary situation may be viewed as the situation within which reflection and action take place, it would be God's Word which illuminates the reflection and guides the action.¹¹⁸ The Word of God 'does not come simply as another source of knowledge about ourselves or the world, but a dynamic

call which demands a response.'¹¹⁹ Culture and experience may contribute to the framework within which we understand the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, but their revelatory value is neither primary nor even equal to scriptural revelation.¹²⁰

Correlation thus has to be discerned through the outworking of God's story in creation, the Incarnation and the outpouring of the Spirit.¹²¹ It must also respect the Scripture's diverse modes of uttering God's word.¹²² In cultural theological terms, correlation may be linked with the translatability of the Gospel—Gospel as public truth for all peoples and nations. Here culture can be seen as that which provides 'the idiom(s) in which the Gospel speaks.'¹²³

¹¹⁹ William Dyrness, "How Does the Bible Function in the Christian Life?" *The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options*. Edited by Robert Johnston (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 164.

¹²⁰ For an extended discussion of Tracy's method, see Gener 'Transformational Correlation.' On the usefulness of Tracy's theory of experiential religion, see my "The Catholic Imagination and Popular Religion in Lowland Philippines: Missiological Significance of David Tracy's Theory of Religious Imaginations" *Mission Studies* 22 (2005), 25-57.

¹²¹ A hermeneutical awareness of the biblical (Christological) horizon shifts the emphasis away from the thinking subject to the 'whole person' whose life is graced by the empowering ministry of God in Christ. See Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology*, 17.

¹²² The story of God's people and God's world is conjoined with the history of Israel (OT), Jesus Christ, and the church (NT). But the progression of the story (biblical time-line) reflects not only the unfolding differentiation and complexity of human life. It also reveals the diverse forms of God's speech.

¹²³ Fackre, *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective*, 213.

¹¹⁶ Gabriel Fackre, 'David Tracy: Evangelically Considered,' in *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 214.

¹¹⁷ William Dyrness, *The Earth is God's: A Theology of American Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), 80-1.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Allan Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976), 12.

Correlation could then be construed as 'the interpretation [and incarnation] of faith in the idiom [as well as structures and institutions] of its time and place'—a familiar practice of the Church in history.¹²⁴ The Church shares the Gospel with the receiving culture in a sense of profound identification, and a listening heart.¹²⁵ It will not mean submission to the 'other' nor aggression against the 'other.' Rather, it will consist of self-assertion (including initiatives of transformation) of God's people, nurtured by real listening.¹²⁶

IV. Conclusion

I have attempted as an Asian (Filipino) theologian to engage David Tracy's approach to public theology from a Reformational evangelical perspective. Looking back, for Tracy, theology's public nature directly relates to theologians' public role as well as to the three 'publics' to whom they speak: church, academy and society. Because of the prominence of conversation, public theology for Tracy is correlational theology. In dialogue with Tracy's approach, I have sketched the contours of a missiological public theology that draws from Tracy but criticizes him internally. Instead of situating public theology within fundamental theology, I have argued for a rethinking of public theology as a theology of public culture viewed transformationally.

It is hoped that this study has challenged evangelical readers to the public role of churches as well as to the public dimensions of Christian theology with implications not just to North American Christianity but also to the global evangelical churches' cultural and societal commitment to be 'salt and light' in God's world.

¹²⁴ Fackre, *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective*, 210.

¹²⁵ C. Rene Padilla, *Mission Between the Times* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985); Jose de Mesa, *In Solidarity with the Culture* (Quezon City: Maryhill School of Theology, 1987) 27-42.

¹²⁶ Robert Bolton, *People Skills* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979). On the notion of transforming initiatives, see Glen Stassen, *Just Peacemaking* (Louisville: WKJP, 1992).

Transforming the Indian Culture of Poverty and Oppression

Samuel Jayakumar

KEYWORDS: *Dalits, inequality, physical disability, governance, mission, new society, modernity, grace, Scripture*

political and religious nationalism, post-modern mind set, oppression of children, urbanization, neglect of the disabled and others.¹

THE LAUSANNE FORUM on World Evangelization, which met in Pattya in 2004, concluded that

The dramatic change in the political and economic landscape in recent years has raised new challenges in evangelization for the church. The polarization between east and west makes it imperative that the church seek God's direction for the appropriate responses to the present challenges. In the 31 issue groups these new realities were taken into consideration, including the HIV pandemic, terrorism, globalization, the global role of media, poverty, persecution of Christians, fragmented families,

Poverty therefore remains a major challenge for the mission practitioners. This paper explores some of the proven historical approaches to the problems of the Indian poor, the Dalits and the marginalized people groups. Lessons are drawn from historical models of the Dalit group conversions to the gospel of Christ. Historical examples found in the 19th century European Christian mission have demonstrated themselves capable of combating the socio-economic problems of poverty, child labour, oppression of women and physical ailments;

¹ D Claydon (ed.), *A New Vision, a New Heart, a Renewed Call: Lausanne Occasional Papers from the 2004 Forum for World Evangelization* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2006), x.

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and ushered in socio-economic change in the larger society.

During the 19th century the poverty-stricken outcaste communities of South India with the assistance of the Christian missionaries developed spiritual resources to overcome their poverty. Their newfound faith in the gospel of Christ provided them identity, dignity and above all hope for change in the midst of misery. The congregations that sprang up in the mass movement areas became real *koinonia*—communities of transformation. The Scripture translated into their vernacular language enriched, affirmed and empowered their lives.

Although this paper relates to the Indian poor, references are made to other two thirds world countries especially, Africa.

I Context of Indian Poverty

Indian rural poverty is the greatest challenge to mission practitioners. The world's largest number of poor people are found in India. While Africa has 200 million poor, India's poor add up to 400 million.² One out of every three persons in India is poor. India lags behind the developed countries in areas of survival needs such as health, drinking water, food and shelter. About one million children require schooling. The National Sample Survey reveals that the Indian economy is substantially affected by poverty. In rupee terms, the all-India average

monthly per capita consumer expenditure (MPCE) was Rs. 495 in rural areas and Rs. 914 in urban India. Of that, Rs. 914 in urban India Rs. 400 went for food.³ For the most part the women, children, Dalits, tribals and disabled have no hope for economic development and social mobility.⁴

Indian poverty is more complex than simply income deprivation. Poverty involves lack of empowerment, knowledge, and opportunity as well as lack of income and assets. It is contended that poverty can be understood in relative (proportionate) or absolute terms but is commonly measured by level of income or wealth. 'Income based measures do nothing to show factors often associated with poverty such as the prevalence of disease, low life expectancy, inferior housing and poor education and diet'.⁵ In the two-thirds world countries such as India, poverty is not merely a condition of lack of income or basic needs, but is a sense of powerlessness and

3 *The Times of India*, 21 March 2003, 7

4 The World Food Programme, Food and Agricultural Organization and M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation planned a meeting on a road map for a hunger free India by 2007. Two questions particularly bothered the experts assembled. The first was: who is hungry? The second, was: what strategies should be adopted to overcome hunger. These questions are seems to funny because already many national level researches have identified the poor as well as the strategies. Y.K. Alagh, 'Poverty has Many Lines', *New Indian Express*, (April 8, 2003)

5 Robin Grimble, 'Rural Poverty and Environmental Management: A Framework for Understanding', *Transformation*, Vol.19, No.2, (April, 2002), 120-121.

2 Of the one billion population, 320 million are officially poor. Soma Basu, 'War against Poverty', *The Hindu*, January 28, 2003.

deprivation of entitlement.⁶

Robin Grimble defines poverty as the scarcity of economic resources or assets that poor rural people can access for livelihood sustaining or enhancing purposes. The poor thus have first of all limited access to productive resources, either privately owned or communal. These may include land, water, forests and that part of biodiversity that forms an essential part of many poor people's livelihood systems and strategies. Secondly they have few financial assets, including income from the sale of farm or wild products, or physical goods that can be consumed or exchanged.⁷

Similarly, while describing African poverty, Archbishop N. Ndungane maintains that poverty is not just low income but it is a complex situation involving multidimensional deprivations such as loss human dignity.

The deprivations around poverty are not just about low incomes; they include loss of human dignity: this is about human suffering. There is also poverty in terms of denial of access to opportunities for advancement. That is particularly telling since we live in a world in which, on the one hand, there are huge material and natural resources at our disposal, as well as dramatic technological advances; and yet, on the other hand, there are inequalities and uneven distribution of wealth

resulting in the fearful consequences of poverty which we see in the faces of women, children, and people with disabilities. Poverty also brings with it a retardation of knowledge, preventing all human beings from sharing in the increasing wealth of technological information that is available.⁸

For the Archbishop the war on poverty and inequality is South Africa's most important priority and our greatest challenge. He contends that eradicating poverty is essential to consolidate the gains of their new democracy, and it is a precondition for social justice, peace and security in their land.⁹ This is also true of Asia.

In the same way, according to Professor C.T. Kurian, in India poverty and inequality are closely related.

Even if poverty and inequality are not the same thing, there is nothing wrong in saying that under certain conditions the two can be closely related. Growth of income over time can affect both poverty and inequality, although the precise manner of this impact cannot be determined a priori. Growth can reduce poverty and inequality; growth can reduce poverty and increase inequality; growth can increase both inequality and poverty.¹⁰

8 Njongonkulu Ndungane, *A World with a human face: A Voice from Africa*, (London: SPCK, 2003), 20.

9 Ndungane, *A World with a human face*, 20.

10 C.T. Kurian, 'Poverty and Inequality', *The Hindu*, (November 11, 2002). Also, see Andre Beteille, 'Poverty and Inequality', *The Hindu*, (November 2, 2002)

6 *Coalescing the Unreached for Poverty Reduction: Voices from the Ground*, (New Delhi: Independent Commission for People's Rights & Development, 2003).

7 Robin Grimble, *Rural Poverty*, 122.

So also gender inequalities are common in two-third world countries. Gender based inequality is a major obstacle to escape from poverty. For instance in work places such in agricultural sectors and in unorganised sectors, women are paid lower salaries than men. It is noteworthy that women farmers are responsible for more than 50 per cent of food production worldwide. In two-thirds world countries women produce 60-80 per cent of the food. As much as 90 per cent of the work in the rice fields of Asia is carried out by women.¹¹ In the rural India women raise livestock, run poultry, and manage dairy production. Yet women are the worst victims of poverty. Consequently their families, their men and their children suffer.

Illiteracy is another situation to be addressed. Indian National Sample Survey indicates that the overall rate of illiteracy has risen to 62 percent. In India poverty affects education and vice-versa. Quality education has been established as one of the most important pointers to development and an essential requirement for capacity building and the improvement in the quality of life. In spite of increased opportunities of entry to education, the Dalits, women, and the physically challenged in the rural areas are continuing to be deprived of education. When basic education is available, the poorest are unable to take advantage of it because the direct costs attached to it are quite high. Thus poverty is both a cause and an effect of insufficient

access to or completion of quality education.¹² Eradication of poverty requires providing access to quality education. While lack of education perpetuates poverty, education would empower the poor, particularly the women in so many ways.

Another important aspect is poverty and population. In villages poor people raise larger families to provide more working hands to supplement the family incomes. They also provide safety against early deaths of the siblings.¹³ However excessive population growth is an unmanageable problem for a country such as India.

Addressing the plight of people who are physically challenged is a significant part of reducing poverty.¹⁴ It is estimated that the population with disability in India is over 90 million. Diseases such as leprosy, malaria, cholera, typhoid, tuberculosis and HIV/Aids are major causes of poverty. Government hospitals have no drugs to treat even ordinary illness, let alone the major ones. The private multi-speciality hospitals serve the rich and the affluent community. The medical profession is no longer considered a ser-

¹² K.Venkata Subramanian, Education and Poverty, *The Hindu*, (December 4, 2001).

¹³ But one can not be dogmatic about this view. There are examples show that lower economic decline leads to lower population, particularly among the Indian middle class. Cf. Bharat Jhunjhunwala, 'Poverty and Population', *The New Indian Express*, (October 9, 2002).

¹⁴ According to James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank efforts to reduce global poverty must include the disabled. 'Efforts to Reduce Global Poverty', *The Hindu*, (December 3, 2002).

¹¹ Elizabeth Warham, 'Feeding the World', *Developments: The International Development Magazine*, Issue 13, First Quarter 2001, 7.

vice to humanity, but for the most part is merely a business for making money. Private clinics are found in abundance, but they are like petty shops opened on every corner to rob the people.

Above all, as in Africa so in India, bad governance, corruption, loss of markets, lack of expertise in disaster management (such as flood, earthquake etc) as well as erosion in ethical values,¹⁵ unending completion, laziness, lack of ambition, lack of thrift (or savings) and consumerism are further causes of poverty.¹⁶

In such a context the Christian answer should be one of hope. In the past the two hundred years the performance of Christian mission in India was remarkable. Therefore this study is undertaken to draw lessons from the 19th century missionary work among the poorest of the poor who are now called the Dalits.

¹⁵ About 30 percent of the edibles sold in various parts of the country are adulterated. The adulterants used include sand, marble chips, stones, earth, horse dung powder, bark powder and non-edible colours. Some of the clarified items like soft drinks have been found to contain asbestos fiber, which leads to intestinal cancer. Profit margins are so high in adulteration that some anti-social elements have even taken to the commercial manufacture of adulterants on a large scale.

¹⁶ The Indian consumer market is growing rapidly. The Indian masses are targeted by the consumer markets and the multinational corporations. See S.L. Rao, 'India's Rapidly Changing Consumer Markets', *Economics and Political Weekly*, (September 30-October 6, 2000).

II Christian Mission Envisioning a New Society

Historically Christian mission in India among the poor and outcaste communities was the envisioning of a new society. This was humanly speaking very odd for the missionaries. In reality for them it was just hoping against the hope, because the missionary work was done in a society that was deeply religious, deeply caste-ridden, the lower castes of which were terribly oppressed. The missionary task was a battle against sati (burning of widows), untouchability, child marriage, temple prostitution, infanticide, slavery, illiteracy, oppression of women, children, etc. Nevertheless a new society was taking shape before their very eyes as the missionaries and the new believers worked towards it.

As the Bishop of Madras, George Spencer wrote in 1845, the missionaries and the native pastors who worked among the poor outcastes regarded themselves as prophets in the 'valley of dry bones'. They saw that the 'dry bones of these people in the valley of the shadow of death had been shaken and were coming together by the influence of the Spirit towards the living Head.'¹⁷ The missionaries had the biblical vision of the Kingdom of God. Like the prophets they saw the restoration of the glorious kingdom by God himself.

For the most part, persons who were involved in the 19th century mission were more motivated by the expansion of the Kingdom of God than

¹⁷ Bishop Spencer, 'Missionary Clergy in Tinnevely', (January 11, 1845).

by any national or political interest.¹⁸ Christian mission and social transformation of the poor and oppressed are always inseparable. The missionaries and their native pastors believed that the gospel of Christ was not only the power of God for salvation but also the power of God for socio-economic and political liberation.¹⁹

During the 19th century in some parts of South India, especially in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, the native Anglican priests who were also converts accepted the gospel of Christ as an option for social change among themselves. The missionaries and the native clergy, including outstanding leaders like V.S. Azariah (first Indian Anglican Bishop of British India), had a definite understanding of the process of social change. For them social transformation came through vital personal religion and vibrant faith.²⁰

The missionaries focused on the individual poor persons, families, communities and caste groups and not merely on the problem of poverty or oppression. Their aim was a church among and of the poor and oppressed communities who positively responded to the gospel of Christ, and not the total

transformation of the whole oppressed society. In other words the missionaries were not universalists, but particularists. This approach to change among the poor communities did not necessarily result in either privileging some people within a caste group or promoting separatism between different caste groups, but within a century people belonging to different castes experienced transformation. They together crossed the pollution line and attained the status of respectable classes in Indian society.²¹

Later on Indian Christian leaders such as K.M. Banerjee saw conversion to Christianity as much related to 'the prospect (or envisioning) of India's regeneration'.²² Similarly the Madras Native Christian Association said in its report (1893) that 'Christianity has wrought miracles in our midst. It has lifted many of us from the mire of social degradation, it has enlightened us, liberated us from the trammels of superstition and custom and has planted in us the instincts of a free and noble humanity'.²³

The report asserted that Christians have not simply exchanged one creed for another, but 'have undergone a radical change of life, a thorough readjustment in standards of Judgment in motives and in conduct' and reminded themselves that they ought to be alive to their responsibilities and thus become 'a real power for good in this land.' As Bishop J.W. Gladstone has

rightly observed, 'for many Indians who were leaders of thought and action in the Indian Christianity, their new religious confession was a segment of the new Spiritual and cultural self-image of their nation'.²⁴

Historically speaking Christian mission always has been inviting persons to Christ, challenging corrupt and evil systems, structures and cultures and helping individuals and communities to experience the transforming power of God.²⁵ When we examine 19th century missions we see that the gospel of Christ provided the missionaries and the poor with whom they worked with a vision of transformation. They believed and hoped that their lives and their circumstances would be changed. Bishop Stephen Neill, a distinguished mission historian with extensive personal experience, said that 'things will not change until men and women begin to believe that they can change. The outcaste Christian saw them change before his very eyes and worked towards it'.²⁶ Likewise Vinay Samuel observed, 'the faith of the poor themselves is a significant factor in poverty reduction.... religious faith is also, part of their personal identity, the foundation of their sense of community, and the basis of their hope'.²⁷

24 Mission and Evangelism in India: A Historical Appraisal, Gurukul, Madras, 30, 31.

25 Vinay Samuel, 'Mission as Transformation', *Transformation*, Vol.19, No.4, (October 2002), 244.

26 Stephen Neill, in D.McGavran (ed), *Conciliar Evangelical Debate*, (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), 321.

27 D.Belshaw, R.Calderisi, and C.Sugden, *Faith in Development: Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa*, (Oxford: Regnum, 2001), 5-6.

The Christian communities and congregations established and maintained by the missionaries and native priests created hope for the poor and the oppressed classes. The gospel released the poor from centuries of bondage when there had been no escape otherwise from their situation. Christian faith provided the poor with the general confidence that life is meaningful and that it was possible to change one's quality of life by one's efforts.²⁸

Even so the poor believed in the gospel of Christ because they could see the changes in the lives of other poor persons who have committed their lives to Christ. As the missionary has remarked that *the poor walk by sight and not by faith*.

... seeing their Christian countrymen free from boils [or rage] of quarrels, happier in their villages, cleaner and neater in their persons and to all intents and purposes more contented if not actually wealthier than themselves, by the simplest logical process they conclude Christianity to be a better religion than their own, and embraced it. Nor is this to be wondered at when it is remembered that they walk by sight not by faith.²⁹

Moreover, as Vinay Samuel has put it, transformation of individuals and society is the will of God for all people and especially for the poor.

18 One example is that the extraordinary three-way programme in India was of cooperation involving Lutherans and Anglicans and drawing support from Germany, Denmark and Great Britain. This reveals the greater concern for the expansion of the Kingdom of God proved more powerful than the national or political interests.

19 V.S. Azariah, *Dornakal Diocesan Magazine*, Vol.XIII, No.4, (April, 1936), 3-4.

20 S. Jayakumar, *Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion*, (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), 332-333.

21 Jayakumar, *Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion*, 327.

22 R.D. Paul, *Chosen Vessels*, (Madras: CLS, 1961), 145ff.

23 The Madras Native Christian Association', (HF, June 1893).

28 S.Jayakumar, *Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion*, 218, 286.

29 J.F.Kearns, 'Muthalur Mission', *SPG-R*, (1854), 630.

Transformation is to enable God's vision of society to be actualised in all relationships, social, economic and spiritual, so that God's will may be reflected in human society and his love be experienced by all communities especially the poor.³⁰

But it is not a counter-cultural effort, whereas it is a cross-cultural endeavour—that is, it engages with rather than confronts those of other groups. For instance V.S. Azariah recognized Christian faith not as a cultural contradiction but as a fulfilling of the imperfect native culture. He was of the opinion that Christianity was a refinement of the culture of natives to enable them to live a civilized life, free from the negative and oppressive aspects of their culture such as ignorance, illiteracy, spirit worship, immorality and other traditional practices.³¹

Missionaries attempted to transform the declining heathen rural communities into a visible koinonia, Christian community. Among the mass conversion movement areas of South India the village congregation is a kind of koinonia, a fellowship of believers devoted to Scripture and worship. While much was similar to pre-conversion community life, a Christian village in South India was a new community with new responsibilities and privileges. As the poor accepted the missionaries as their new leaders, they were willing to modify the administra-

tion of their villages according to Christian principles.

Missionaries like Caldwell, Huxtable and Margoschis enabled their villages to be governed by their own traditional elders called headmen but based on Christian principles that they had drawn up. Thus local leadership was developed with a view to social change among the new converts as the people cooperated with the missionaries by accepting them as their leaders. It was a community living based on biblical principles of equality, liberty and fraternity for the all-round advancement of poor believers.³²

The gospel of Christ has fascinated the poor because it offered the promise of change and transformation. However, first of all the gospel has to deal with the culture of poverty and oppression in which the poor struggle.

III Gospel and Transformation

India is known to the world over for its ancient culture and belief systems as well as for its poverty. All these elements are quite inter-related with each other—so much so that poverty is very much linked with culture and religion. Traditionally, Indian belief systems have always determined Indians' lifestyle. For the majority of Indians life has been one of negation rather than affirmation. Rightly or wrongly, Indian sages chose to renounce the world and run away from all the good-

ness of life rather than face the challenges of it. These ascetics lived off alms in abject poverty and want.

Although modernity and western culture have affected our Indian belief systems and cultures, poverty is still regarded as the outward sign of 'spirituality' for the *swamijis* and *mahatmas*. While these *swamijis* and *mahatmas* adopt this type of 'austere and simple life', theirs and the message of the priestly class to the masses, the poor and the oppressed is a little different. They say that they are poor, untouchable and handicapped because of their *karma*—retribution of the sins they have carried with them into this birth! The belief in '*karma janmanthra*' destroys the spirit of enterprise and the inner urge for development and growth. Any belief system that doesn't liberate the people from the shackles of poverty and misery, but rather compels them to accept the sufferings as their fate, need to be jettisoned.³³

Consequently the 19th century European missionaries who worked among the poor and the oppressed communities had to approach the culture of poverty and oppression in a new way. As Professor Kancha Ilaiah has pointed out, the real change among the Indian poor came only after the Christian missionaries began interacting with them. The missionaries, instead of condemning the food habits, dress code, ritual practices of these masses, began seeing the people as those created in the image of God with all the potentials for change and progress.

They accepted them as they were—with an unconditional positive regard. They lived with them, ate their food and freely interacted with them in order to give them cultural confidence.³⁴

In some parts of South India the poor and the oppressed masses had the advantage of living with the European missionary families and being influenced by their lives. This influence was to be seen particularly amongst the people who were living in mission stations such as Edayangudi, Nazareth, Muthaloor, Puthiamputhur, Christianagaram and Sawyerpuram. While some of these towns had a permanent missionary for many decades, others had a missionary for ten or fifteen years only. Many of the early missionaries such as J.L. Irion, A.F. Caemmerer, G.U. Pope, R. Caldwell, J.F. Kearns, and J.K. Best lived with their families in the midst of the poor Dalits.³⁵ The progress the Dalits have made in every aspect of life could be attributed to the personal influence of the European missionaries:

That Christianity should have made so much progress under such circumstances must be attributed to the personal influence of the numerous European missionaries who have laboured in this field, many of them living with their families in the largest of the Christian

³⁰ Vinay Samuel, *Mission as Transformation*, (Oxford: Regnum, 1999), preface.

³¹ V.S. Azariah, *The Bishop's letter* (1934), 4. S. Harper, *Azariah and Indian Christianity*, 249f.

³² S. Jayakumar, *Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion*, 223, 280, 309. Stephen Neill, *Under Three Flags*, 77. S. Harper, *Azariah and Indian Christianity*, 246.

³³ M. Ezra Sargunam, 'Culture as an element of Development', Unpublished Paper, October 13-14, 1999.

³⁴ Kancha Ilaiah, 'Culture of Oppression', *Hindu*, (Chennai) February 22, 2003.

³⁵ There were also many CMS missionaries such as C.T.E. Rhenius, John Thomas and others who lived among the Dalits with their large families, effecting great influence upon the minds of the local people.

villages, entirely cut off from the European society, but being brought into daily contact with the people. The result has been that the religion of the people is more of a subjective nature than it is objective.³⁶

Maybe this is one of the reasons why in India the missionaries who chose to live in villages were more successful in effecting group conversion of the natives and subsequent social change than those who settled in towns or cities, who effected only occasional individual conversions.

Since the method adopted by the missionaries suited the feudal system, it was a means of social change as well as a source of rapid growth in the number of converts among the poor and oppressed communities. The missionaries reshaped their villages into model Christian settlements with the cooperation of government authorities. Since, for the most part, it was at the initiative of the missionaries that the government provided facilities such as post offices, railways, road transport, telecommunications, dispensaries, educational institutions, and clean drinking water, these should be treated as the contribution of the missionaries.³⁷ On one occasion the District Collector remarked that Christian villages were an oasis in the desert. Hence the English newspaper, the *Madras Mail* reported,

But, after all, this institution is

merely a small part of the multifarious cares which Mr. Margoschis undertakes for the good of the people. In the buildings around us children are taught, and the youth of both sexes are trained in professional and industrial occupations which will make them useful and orderly members of society; orphans and children abandoned by their parents are cared for; the deaf and dumb are instructed in technical arts; the distressed are relieved. No one can come to this oasis in the desert and be a witness of all this, and watch the contentment and happiness bearing on every face, and the order that reigns throughout, without being filled with admiration for the man to whose philanthropic, wholehearted and self-sacrificing labours these results are due, and whose genius pervades the whole.³⁸

Another newspaper, the *Eastern Star*, reported that there were a number of other villages regarded as having become oases through the efforts of the missionaries and native priests, such as a South Indian town, Kudangulam, the head station of the Radhapuram mission district, and by the efforts of the native priest, S.S. Daniel.³⁹ However, for the most part, being somewhat paternalistic, the missionaries provided all these facilities and opportunities not for the mere social advancement of their converts but to

arouse them from what they called their spiritual, moral and intellectual slumber so that they could gain all-round growth and live an abundant life.

Whenever converts desired only worldly benefits and advantages without making any visible spiritual progress, the opportunities for social advancement were denied them. The missionaries and the native priests always gave first place to Christian character formation and Church discipline. The missionaries wanted the means of social advancement to be used to develop what they called deep spirituality and consistent character which is a result of spiritual transformation. The missionaries looked for signs of faith, confidence and hope in Christ as well as giving and sharing, family fidelity, honesty and stewardship as the pointers to character change.⁴⁰

The village Christians often confessed that because of Christianity they enjoyed privileges which the non-Christian villages did not. They contended that it was the gospel which enabled them to progress in knowledge, and in what the missionaries called civilization and social status. Thus a South Indian native Christian leader D. Periyannayagam observed that,

We as Christians enjoy several blessings and privileges, spiritual and temporal which heathens around us do not have, and which

are worthy of being proclaimed with joy as good tidings. Spiritually we have abundant knowledge of the true God, we know how God sent His only beloved Son to redeem us sinners by his precious death; the Holy Spirit is given to us to sanctify us. The Church has been established among us as a house of salvation; we have the holy sacraments whereby we may be united to Christ.⁴¹

He goes on to say that,

We have the different means of grace whereby we may obtain grace from God, we have the Word of God for being acquainted with His holy will; in short we have everything that is necessary to enable us to secure a happy life in eternity. So also, we have several temporal blessings. We have schools established amongst us for the cultivation of our knowledge. There are dispensaries in various places where the sick can receive help. We have pecuniary assistance in a variety of ways. In short, we have various means of progressing in knowledge, in civilization and in worldly circumstances.⁴²

The native Christians were aware of the awakening and progress that Christianity had brought to them. The native priest acknowledged that peo-

³⁶ A. Margoschis, Tinneveli Mission, 49.

³⁷ A.F. Caemmarer, Caldwell, Margoschis and a few others reshaped their villages into self-sufficient model Christian towns.

³⁸ Madras Mail, (October 22, 1892),

³⁹ Edward Pillai, Eastern Star, (November 4, 1895), quoted by S.S. Daniel, 'Radhapuram Report', SPG-R, (1897), 2.

⁴⁰ S. Jayakumar, *Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion*, 249-270. Cf. Makonen Getu, 'Measuring Transformation', *Transformation*, Vol. 19, No. 2, (April 2002), 95-96.

⁴¹ D. Periyannayagam, 'A Sermon Preached on the Occasion of the SPG Bicentenary Festival', SPG-R, (1901), 1-2. Cf. 'The Rt. Rev. Father in God, Henry, by the Divine permission the Lord Bishop of Madras', (Madras: Addison Press, 1901), Pamphlet in *SPG-R*, (1901), 1.

⁴² Periyannayagam, 'Sermon', 1.

ple who once sat in darkness and doing the works of darkness have now come to the light and have put on the armour of light. People who were once were 'slaves to sin and Satan' have become the children of God and are trying to live a holy life. People who once acted 'as beasts and were barbarous and addicted to cruel actions' have now been made children of God and are progressing in civilization.⁴³ Social scientists such as Lila Krishnan believe that while negative religious beliefs are a hindrance to social change, positive beliefs 'nurture the idea of working in order to improve the quality of worldly life'.⁴⁴

Similarly in other parts of India, the missionary approach to culture is noteworthy. There are many examples of missionaries who lived with the people and identified with them in order to bring about transformation. One example is William Carey who identified with the culture and customs of the common Bengalis in order to serve them most effectively.⁴⁵ Once while lec-

turing in Fort William College he said that, 'I may say, indeed, that their manners, customs, habits and sentiment are so obvious to me as if I am myself a native'.⁴⁶ That is the way he could effect transformation throughout the state of Bengal with the help of the British government.

Carey's approach was clearly reflected in his stated missionary purposes. They are: (a) churches should be run by Indians for Indians; (b) no overseas control to be imposed on the Indian churches which were to maintain fraternal relations with foreign church bodies; (c) to esteem and treat Indians as equals; (d) Serampore Mission would endeavour to develop Indian leadership.⁴⁷

Carey and other missionaries in different part of India led the battles against *sati* caste, untouchability, child marriage, female infanticide, bonded agricultural labour, drunkenness and opium addiction. Also, they recovered the local language, literature and revitalized them. This resulted in renaissance in various parts of the country. Nevertheless most of the missionary activities had to begin with the translation of the Bible into the vernacular, for the Bible was central to Protestant Christian faith.

enced timid and hesitating men and women to take steps to the evangelizing of the world.' Another wrote of him, 'Taking his life as a whole, it is not too much to say that he was the greatest and most versatile Christian missionary sent out in modern times.' See www.wholesomewords.org

⁴⁶ William Carey, *Primitai Orientalis*, Vol.III, (Calcutta: Fort William College, 1802)

⁴⁷ T.V. Philip, 'William Carey Lecture', Senate of Serampore College, Serampore, 1993, 2.

IV Vernacular Scripture Empowers the Poor

In their scholarly and Christian endeavour, the missionaries produced Bibles, Prayer Books and other literature in Tamil.⁴⁸ For the Protestant missionaries the Bible was central to Christian faith. Consequently from the beginning they gave themselves to the translation of Scriptures into the vernacular. Being influenced by the intellectual currents of the period, especially Empiricism and Enlightenment, they were also interested in studying the religions and cultures of the world.⁴⁹

Among the languages spoken in India, Tamil was the first into which the Bible was translated.⁵⁰ As a result the Protestant Christians of South India who were predominantly from the outcastes began to regard themselves as *Vethakaramga*, the people of the Scripture. It had always been the Brahmins and the caste Hindus who had possession of the Hindu scriptures, the *Vedas*, whereas the outcastes were for centuries prohibited

not only from possessing the *Vedas*, but also banned from hearing the *Vedas* being read. Now they were given *Vetham*, the Bible, to possess and use by themselves for their edification. They came to be considered by themselves and the people around as People of the *Vedas*, the Scripture. Yet the Brahmins and the caste Hindus, who had always boasted of the *Vedas*, had no such popular designation. Generations have passed; the Dalit Christians of South India still regard themselves as people of the Scriptures. The Scriptures have thus given them a particular identity, which thus far is claimed by no one else in the region.

Bible study in the vernacular was a key feature of the pastoral care offered by the Anglican missionaries, and efforts were made to give scriptural guidance to suit the oppressive circumstances of local people.⁵¹ They interpreted the Bible in the local context. They saw this as essential to effecting transformation. For example, J.F. Kearns taught the book of Exodus, emphasizing the lesson that God takes an interest in the worldly as well as spiritual prosperity and happiness of those who love and adore him as their God. The book of Joshua was taught in such a way as to demonstrate that even in this life, despite their power and prosperity, God punishes the wicked *heathen*; the book of Judges was used to illustrate that God protects and blesses his people so long as they con-

⁴⁸ The missionaries were motivated by evangelical concern and the long tradition of learning and scholarship among the Church of England's clergy.

⁴⁹ However, while the concerns of the colonial Indologists were political and secular, the missionaries' concerns were Christian. When the British established political superiority over all other European rivals in India, they also tried to establish intellectual superiority over all other European countries with regard to understanding India. A.K. Davidson, *Evangelicals and Attitudes*, 16-37.

⁵⁰ I.H. Victor, 'A Brief History of the Bible', *ICHR* vol.VIII, No.2, (December, 1984), 106.

⁵¹ R.Caldwell, 'Edaiyangudi Report', (1845), *CVND*, Madras, Box 8, 5. H.C.Huxtable, 'Sawyerpuram Report', *SPG-R* (1856), 2509ff.

⁴³ Periyannayagam, 'Sermon', 5.

⁴⁴ Lila Krishnan, 'Has Rural India Changed?' *International Journal of Indian Studies*, Vol.3, No.2, (July-December, 1993), 92,97.

⁴⁵ William Carey was born in a small thatched cottage in Paulerspury, a typical Northamptonshire village in England, August 17, 1761, of a weaver's family. It was in 1793 that Carey went to India. 'Shoemaker by trade, but scholar, linguist and missionary by God's training,' William Carey was one of God's giants in the history of evangelism! One of his biographers, F. Dealville Walker, wrote of Carey: 'He, with a few contemporaries, was almost singlehanded in conquering the prevailing indifference and hostility to missionary effort; Carey developed a plan for missions, and printed his amazing *Enquiry*; he influ-

tinue to obey him.⁵²

The Bible in vernacular language produces indigenous spirituality for it helps the poor to relate the gospel to their culture. This is not only true among various South Asian countries, but also in the continent of Africa where the 'next Christendom is emerging'.

The actual results of the impact of the message about Jesus often turned out to be quite different. In specifically religious terms, the single most significant feature of this coming of a worldwide faith in Jesus was that the Bible became quite early available in the mother-tongues of the people who were then learning about Jesus. In areas where the acceptance of the message has been most widespread, as in tropical Africa, having the Bible in African languages enabled African converts to discover parallels between the biblical world (not just in the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament) of miracles, exorcisms, healing and prophecy, and their own cultural and religious world of spirit-beings and supernatural forces.⁵³

Also, the Scripture in the vernacular is the cause for proliferation of denominations and community

churches. They are numerous in India as well as in Africa. The mushrooming of churches is an indication of the transformation that is taking place due to the indigenous form of religious experience of the marginalized people.

The Bible in the mother tongues of Africa became a time bomb which exploded into the numerous and diverse 'independent' churches proliferating on the African continent. But the Independents only exemplify in the extreme what is now true also of many of the mission-established churches of Africa. Far from being the work of 'foreign agents' promoting an imperialist religion, this mushrooming of churches in fact indicates how at home Africans are in the message about Jesus. In African Christianity, it is not a Western Jesus who reigns, but the Jesus who is powerful to save in the African world.⁵⁴

For the most part the Christian faith has in the course of its expansion developed generally as a vernacular religion. The poor could directly speak to God in vernacular as well as listen to him directly while God speaks to them in their own language. This revolutionized their understanding of God and their relationship to him as their creator and redeemer. Now they are no more in need of sacred language (Sanskrit) or sacred person (Brahmin priest).

Unlike Brahminical Hinduism and Islam the refusal of an imposed, the so-called sacred language, has meant that

the Bible in whatever language always remains the Word of God. Here is the clue to what has been called the 'infinite cultural translatability' of the Christian faith. This is what creates change in the perspectives (world-view) of the poor. The people's understanding of their god and his relationship with life-problems are affected positively.⁵⁵

Christian conversion encompassed the expansion of a world-view. The missionaries contended that non-Christian societies were in need of 'comprehensive regeneration' or transformation both in invisible experience and visible change in life. Their attempt was not completely to change their traditional cultural customs but to alter, modify, preserve and build upon them. The poor and the oppressed communities whole heartedly accepted a vernacular version of Western Christian culture and values that the missionaries offered to them along with the gospel. The natives confessed that the new religion has enlarged their ideas, sharpened their intellects, and above all taught them to feel they were superior to what they originally considered themselves to be.⁵⁶

Modern development workers contend that, as they work with the poor, they are beginning to see the whole issue of poverty as a question of faith and spirituality. It is not socio-economics plus spirituality. It is deeply spiritual and religious issue. Jayakumar Christian of World Vision wrote that, 'the more we work with the poor, we

are beginning to realize that without addressing the issue of spirituality, we cannot do sustainable development at all. Whatever we might do, in terms of health, economics etc, fundamentally is an issue of spirituality'.⁵⁷ Bishop J.W. Picket made a similar observation after a thorough study of mass movements to Christ.

The depressed classes in India are desperately poor. But their chief economic need is not financial; it is an antidote to the poisonous ideas that have made them incapable of struggling successfully with their environment.... Much more devastating than physical oppression has been the psychological oppression inflicted by the Hindu doctrines of karma and rebirth, which have taught them that they are a degraded, worthless people suffering just retribution for sins committed in earlier lives....The concepts that the Christian Gospel gives them of themselves and of God in relation to their sufferings and sins are worth incomparably more to them than any direct social or economic service the Church could offer.⁵⁸

Similarly an Indian Christian leader, V. Mangalwadi wrote that,

Poverty is not their main problem. The lack of hope (for a better future), lack of faith (in man, government or God) and lack of initia-

52 J.F. Kearns, *Puthiamputhur*, (1859) 1259. Here we must note that the Bible is not used as a blunt instrument in the oppression of people, where as an instrument of liberation. See Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

53 Jesus 2000: *One Man Above All others have Changed the World*, (Oxford: Lion, 1989).

54 Jesus 2000.

55 Jesus 2000.

56 S.Jayakumar, *Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion*, 330, 333.

57 Jayakumar Christian, 'Spirituality and Social Transformation among the Poor', in S.D.Ponraj and John Robb (ed), *Transform Your World Through Prayer*, (Chennai: Mission Educational Books, 1999).

58 J.W.Picket, *Christ's Way to India's Heart*, (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing Co., 1938), 173.

tive (born out of dehumanizing oppression and loss of self-confidence) are paralyzing mental/cultural factors which prevent them from any action towards freedom and development.⁵⁹

Vinay Samuel contends that, 'it is only the sense of human dignity and self worth conferred on the poor through the Christian salvation experience and world-view that empowers them to respond proactively to opportunities for material improvement'.⁶⁰

The foregoing description shows that we need a wholistic understanding of the problem of poverty. A study of mission history helps us to discover the need for such understanding in order to serve the poor.

V Biblical Concern and Transformational Mission

In the Bible God always identifies himself with the poorest of the poor—the orphans, widows, strangers, and people with no hope. This is very clear from the exodus event. 'I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their task masters: I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them...' (Ex. 3:7-8). After liberating them from slavery, he commanded them 'You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You

shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you do afflict them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry' Ex. 22:21-23). The conviction that the God of Israel was sovereign over all nations and that he was a saving God is absolutely central to the Scriptures. Israel's liberation from slavery is a revelation of the way this sovereign God can act on behalf of all nations and all peoples (Amos 9:7) if they call up on him in faith as Israel did.⁶¹

The Bible refers to people who are socially, economically and religiously poor.⁶² In India the Dalits, tribals, women, children, diseased and disabled are such people. These people are branded as outcastes, untouchables and un-sightables. Foremost of all they have no sociable position. Secondly they have no reputable religion. They are born outside of Hinduism so that they cannot enter into Hindu temples. Thirdly they are denied dignified jobs so that they remain economically poor.

The Bible marvellously portrays that the poor and oppressed are not deserted by God, but loved by him

⁶¹ D.Senior and C.Stuhlmueeller, *The Biblical Foundations for Missions*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), 321.

⁶² There are six different terms used to refer to the poor. *Rash* means persons who are destitute, without money. *Dal* refers to the social status of those who are destitute. *Ebyon* relates to the needy, those who lack material goods. *Ani* and *Anaw* refer to the oppressed, the powerless, those who are impoverished by the rich and powerful. *Mishken* refers to a dependent person. In Psalm 82:3-4 four of these terms occur. Santa Ana, *Good News for the Poor*, (Geneva: WCC, 1977), 10-11.

through his son Jesus Christ. Jesus in his first preaching at Nazareth synagogue quoting from the book of prophet Isaiah, declared: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, the year of the Lord's favour' (Lu. 4:18-19).

In Mathew 9:35 we find the summary of Jesus' ministry: 'Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness'. Jesus proclaimed by word and deed deliverance from sin and all its consequences. He saw himself as coming with good news for the world's troubled and distressed people. This was further made plain from his response to the disciples of John the Baptist to whom he indicated that, 'the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is preached to the poor' (Mt. 11:5) as signs of his messiahship

Jesus pointed to his healing and life restoring miracles which are integral to Christian mission among the poor. Christian missions were born out of this vision that the gospel of Christ would truly become good news to the poor. As the Father has sent him, so he sends us among the poor, the sick, the downtrodden and the marginalized communities (John 20:21).

Jesus' mission is our mission. The church as a people of God are called to follow the example of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who became poor for their sake (2 Cor. 8:9). He lived as one

among the poor. He promised that the kingdom belongs to them. He said, 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God' (Lu. 6:20; cf Mt. 5:3). 'Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the Kingdom' (Lu. 12:32). Those who work among the poor have to believe that they cannot build the kingdom of God in this world, but God will give it to them.⁶³

The kingdom of God is present reality as well as future hope. The Kingdom of God is, as Hans Kung puts it,

Where in accordance with Jesus' promise, the poor, the hungry, those who weep and those who are downtrodden will finally come into their own; where pain, suffering, and death will have an end.⁶⁴

Jesus invited the poor to come to him for rest and refreshment. He said, 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.' On another occasion he said, 'I am the door. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.' (Mt. 11:28; Jn. 10:9).

Also, Jesus compels the poor to come to him. In the parable of the great feast (Lu. 14:16-24), when those first invited did not respond to his invitation, the king commanded his servant to go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. They were to be compelled to come in

⁵⁹ V.Mangalwadi, 'A Theology of Power in the Context of Social Development', *TRACI Journal* (April, 1981), 15

⁶⁰ D.Belshaw, R.Calderisi, and C.Sugden, *Faith in Development*, 6.

⁶³ J.V.Taylor, 'My Pilgrimage in Mission', *IBMR*, Vol.17, No.2, (April, 1993), 60.

⁶⁴ Hans Kung, *On Being a Christian*, 215.

so that his house may be filled. The parable teaches that we have to compel the poor, the oppressed, the tribals, the marginalized women and the disabled and bring them in.

VI God's Presence with the Poor

Jesus Christ is God Immanuel, God with us. He is with the poor and the oppressed people. Through his incarnation Jesus dwelt among the common people (Jn. 1:14). The sinners, the tax collectors as well as women and children love him for he loved them first. He is the light to those who are in sitting in regions of darkness (Mt. 4:15-16). In his presence those who are mourning will find happiness (Mt. 5:2). He identifies himself with the hungry, thirsty, naked, prisoners, strangers and the least in the society (Mt. 25:31-33, 41-46). As Samuel Escobar points out,

What missionary action needs today is to recover the awareness that God dwells with the poor and has a kind of preference for the poor, that there is a biblical teaching about justice to the poor and oppressed and that we have the example of Jesus himself, of Paul and the primitive church, as well as that of being among the poor with the efficacy of Agape which is not necessarily the efficacy of a given political programme. Missionary action also needs to remember from its biblical point and its historical development that the repentance to which Jesus Christ calls us today may mean for some men, the opening of their eyes to their condition

as oppressions, and the change of their social practices.⁶⁵

VII Poverty not Part Original creation

We are to be aware of the fact that poverty was not part of God's original creation. *The Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics* observed the following three crucial points about God and the poor.⁶⁶

1. Poverty was not part of God's original creation, nor will poverty be part of God's restored creation when Christ returns. Involuntary poverty in all its forms and manifestations is a result of the fall and its consequences. Today out of every five human beings lives in poverty so extreme that their survival is daily in doubt. We believe this is offensive and heart breaking to God.
2. We understand that the God of the Bible is one who in mercy extends love to all. At the same time, we believe that when the poor are oppressed, God is the 'defender of the poor' (Psalm 146:7-9). Again and again in every part of scripture, the Bible expresses God's concern for justice for the poor. Faithful obedience requires that we share God's concern and act on it. 'He who oppresses a poor man insults his maker, but he who is kind to the needy honours Him' (Proverbs

⁶⁵ Samuel Escobar, 'The Gospel and the Poor in' in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (ed), *Evangelism and the Poor*, (Oxford: Regnum, 1987), 106

14:31). Indeed it is only when we right such injustices that God promises to hear our prayers and worship (Isaiah 58:1-9).

3. Neglect of the poor often flows from greed. Furthermore, the obsessive or careless pursuit of material goods is one of the most destructive idolatries in human history (Ephesians 5:5). It distracts individuals from their duties before God, and corrupts personal and social relationships.

⁶⁶ Chris Sugden and Vinay Samuel (ed), *Mission as Transformation: A Theology of the Whole Gospel*, (Oxford: Regnum, 1999), 335.

Conclusion

In this paper we were trying to answer the question of how to bring change in society, especially among the poor and the disadvantaged people. We have drawn some specific lessons from the mission history. We have noted that the missionaries considered ministry to the poor and the oppressed was not an option but an imperative. They served the poor with the vision and hope of bringing change. The poor shared their vision and worked alongside and changes were taking place before their eyes. In the past, the approach of certain missionaries to the culture in which they worked helped the poor to overcome poverty and oppression. We find that this approach is still relevant in our time.

Will Lausanne III Listen? A Latin American Inquiry

J. Daniel Salinas

KEYWORDS: *Evangelical congresses, cultural Christianity, salvation, evangelism, radical discipleship*

The wheels are turning and unless direct divine intervention changes plans, Lausanne III will take place in Cape Town, October 2010. Many preparations are in motion, committees work hard to keep schedules and datelines, places booked and speakers chosen. Anticipation is high and expectations are being defined. The Lausanne movement that started in 1974 has gone through many stages and it is good to see it coming back to its original intention expressed in the Lausanne Covenant.

Those who participated in the first congress in Switzerland remembered that two Latin Americans 'set the Congress alight'¹ and also had a prominent

role in the redaction of the covenant as well as the attached document on radical discipleship. What René Padilla and Samuel Escobar presented at Lausanne I remains relevant and the issues they raised should still be an important part of theological discussion of the church around the world. This paper reviews their presentations showing especial emphasis on the issues the church needs to attend to today.

The presentations of Padilla and Escobar at Lausanne I were regarded as causing a 'significant shift in Christian thinking,' a 'coming of age for evangelicals,' and a 'major breakthrough for evangelicals on questions of social ethics and openness in facing these issues.'² Another participant observed that the results of the Latin Americans' speeches 'were much more

deeply felt than many Western evangelical Christian leaders here could have expected.'³ Rev. John A. Coleman, from Australia, a participant at Lausanne I, noted that the papers presented by Padilla and Escobar 'have probably been subject to more comment than all the other papers put together'.⁴

The few consultations that took place after 1974—on the Homogenous Unit Principle (1977), Gospel and Culture (1978), Simple Life-Style (1980), and Evangelism and Social Responsibility (1982)—reflected the main thrust of their papers. However, after 1982 it seems like Padilla and Escobar were shunned from the Lausanne movement. They were not on the podium at Lausanne II in Manila. Padilla noted that there was a conspicuous absence of Latin American speakers at Lausanne II.⁵ Could it be a reaction to their boldness to challenge the 'success' preachers of their day? Or was it a result of an intentional policy by the people who led Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism (LCWE) from the 1980s? Maybe both. What was in their expositions that caused the evangelical leaders of the Lausanne movement to have goose bumps?

Padilla's paper⁶ was considered by

an Australian journalist as 'the best theological presentation of the congress'.⁷ At the beginning, Padilla disclosed his interest in the 'wider dimensions of the gospel' because they were intrinsically related to the mission of the church in the world. Nevertheless, there were at least two ideas in Padilla's presentation that ruffled some feathers, his identification of 'cultural Christianity' with the 'American way of life' with its reliance on technology, and his presentation of the social dimensions of the gospel.

Regarding the first issue, Padilla argued that 'cultural Christianity' was an adaptation of the gospel to the 'spirit of the times'. He presented as the dominant version of cultural Christianity the 'American Way of Life'. For Padilla, the influence of such a form of 'cultural Christianity' caused the gospel in the majority of the countries of the world to be equated with the 'American Way of Life'. He defined it as a version of Christianity that projected an image of a successful business and the gospel as a marketing of the formula for happiness but without repentance and commitment. Therefore, he said, 'accepting Christ is the means to reach the ideal of the "good life," at no cost. The cross has lost its offense, since it simply points to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us, but it is not a call to discipleship.'

To find customers for their religious product, Padilla continued, North American Christianity relied on technology, reducing evangelism to a mathematical calculation: 'to produce the greatest number of Christians at the

1 Athol Gill, 'Christian Social Responsibility,' in *The New Face of Evangelicalism: An International Symposium on the Lausanne Covenant*, ed. C. René Padilla (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 91.

2 John A. Coleman, 'Aftermath of Lausanne! Evangelism in a Changing World,' *New Life*, 28 August 1974; Gerald Davis, 'A Coming of Age for Evangelicals,' *Church Scene*, 1 August 1974; Bruce Kaye, 'Lausanne: An Assessment,' *CWN Series*, 16 August 1974.

3 Alan Nichols, 'Plain Speaking on Social Issues...' *New Life*, 8 August 1974.

4 Coleman, 'Aftermath of Lausanne! Evangelism in a Changing World.'

5 C. René Padilla, 'Presentación,' *Boletín Teológico* 21, no. 35 (1985), 211.

6 C. René Padilla, 'Evangelism and the World,' in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization Lausanne, Switzerland*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1974), 116-46.

7 Kaye, 'Lausanne.'

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least possible cost in the shortest possible time'. The most sophisticated technological resources are used by this version of 'cultural Christianity' to *efficiently* (italics his) propagate its message of success throughout the world. Padilla identified several problematic characteristics of such Christianity. However, the main problem he mentioned was the reduction of the Gospel to a formula for success and the equation of the triumph of Christ with obtaining the highest number of 'conversions.' He also said technology conditioned the message turning it into a man-centered Christianity: 'It is the religious product of a civilization in which *nothing*, not even man himself, escapes technology.' Furthermore, for Padilla such manipulation of the Gospel inevitably led to slavery to the world and its powers.

Those who remember Lausanne I would probably find in Padilla's description of 'cultural Christianity' a frontal critique of what another speaker at the Congress presented the day before: Donald McGavran's 'Church Growth' program. For Padilla, this version of 'cultural Christianity' put at risk the significance of the gospel. He was not against the growth of the church; instead he was critical of making growth an end of itself. He drove his point home by asking if 'the day is not close when missionary strategists employ B. F. Skinner's "behavior conditioning" and "Christianize" the world through the scientific control of environmental conditions and human genetics.' Hard words to swallow but considering that LCWE championed in the 1980s and 1990s the 'church growth' agenda, Padilla was not too far off the mark.

To talk about the social implications of the Gospel, Padilla started with the message's call to repentance. In order to avoid misunderstandings, Padilla defined repentance as,

... not merely a bad conscience, but a change of attitude, a restructuring of one's scale of values, a reorientation of the whole personality. Repentance is more than a private affair between the individual and God. It is the complete reorientation of life in the world-among men in response to the work of God in Jesus Christ.⁸

We can either take seriously this call to repentance or ignore it, according to Padilla. The right choice is the latter, meaning that we are taking God and the world seriously avoiding social quietism. For him, the goal of the gospel 'is not to take a man out of the world, but to put him into it, no longer as a slave but as a son of God and a member of the body of Christ.'

Another important term for Padilla was salvation. He defined salvation as man's return to God as well as to his neighbor. To explain this, Padilla described two extremes regarding salvation. First, salvation left in the hands of men when, 'eschatology is absorbed by the Utopia and the Christian hope becomes confused with the worldly hope proclaimed by Marxism.' Many might have nodded especially since the 'Cold War' mentality was pervasive. However, when Padilla described the second extreme he might have received many uneasy looks. Padilla described it as the concern solely on 'the future

8 Padilla, 'Evangelism and the World,' 129.

salvation of the soul' making religion 'an escape from present reality,' causing a 'total withdrawal from the problems of society.'

It was in Jesus' ministry that included *kerygma*, *diaconia*, and *Didache* where Padilla based his conclusion that the New Testament does not separate 'soteriology and ethics, communion with God and communion with one's neighbor, faith and works.' Christian commitment unavoidably means involvement with the neighbor.

There is no room for 'eschatological paralysis' nor for 'social strike.' There is no place for statistics of 'how many souls die without Christ every minute,' if they do not take into account how many of those who die, die victims of hunger. There is no place for evangelism that, as it goes by the man who was assaulted by thieves on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, sees in him only a soul that must be saved and ignores the man.⁹

At the end, Padilla made two appeals—one to the Christian person, another to the church. 'The first condition for genuine evangelism is the crucifixion of the evangelist. Without it the Gospel becomes empty talk and evangelism becomes proselytism.' He called the church to take seriously the mission given to her, 'the building of a new humanity... a mission that can be performed only through sacrifice.'

After his presentation, Padilla 'became, to the press, the *enfant terrible*

of the Congress.'¹⁰ It was for sure a speech a lot of people wanted to forget but the issues were too important to let them fade away. Immediately after Padilla's presentation several people including Athol Gill from Australia, John H. Yoder, Samuel Escobar, René Padilla, and others decided to convoke an open meeting to discuss the topic of radical discipleship. Over 500 people gave up their Sunday rest to attend. It was an open forum with no hidden agenda. The discussion was candid and transparent with a noticeable absence of North Americans. A document called *A Response to Lausanne* was drafted and attached to the final *Covenant*. The following day Samuel Escobar was scheduled to speak at the plenary session.¹¹ His was expected to be the *coup de grace* on the social involvement issue, building on the foundation carefully laid by John Stott, Padilla and Michael Green.

From the opening paragraphs, Escobar was overtly outspoken about the relationship of evangelism with the realities of 'overpopulation, hunger, oppression, war, torture, violence, pollution, and the extreme forms of wealth and poverty'. Escobar expanded Padilla's idea of 'cultural Christianity' by describing two main attitudes of

10 Alfred C. Krass, 'The New Face of Evangelicalism: An International Symposium on the Lausanne Covenant (Book Review),' *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 1, no. 1 (1977), 23.

11 Samuel Escobar, 'Evangelism and Man's Search for Freedom, Justice, and Fulfillment,' in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 303-18.

9 Padilla, 'Evangelism and the World,' 131.

evangelicals. First, the goal of making Christianity the official ideology of the West and therefore being committed to 'Western ideals' perhaps as a reaction to Marxism in the East. Second, indifference because for many people the 'Gospel is a spiritual message that has nothing to say about social problems' and consequently separating the message from its ethical demands.

To explain his ideas, Escobar added,

If we put together the growing imbalance of development and affluence in the world, with the past relationship between the 'Christian' Western powers and the missionary enterprise to the Third World, we can understand why the suspicion that the whole task of evangelization in its three dimensions is only an 'imperialistic plot,' a Western way of manipulating people. It would be like selling opiate to keep the masses of the Third World quiet in the midst of their misery and suffering.¹²

Escobar was talking from his personal experience. He heard such misconceptions of evangelistic efforts all throughout Latin American universities. The identification of evangelicals with imperialistic agendas of the northern rich nations was widely held not only by intellectuals. However, Escobar's exhortation seemed to fall on deaf ears if we consider the programs and emphases the LCWE sponsored after Lausanne I.

In agreement with Padilla, Escobar

found a close relationship between the message and the messenger. For him, to 'emphasize the communication of the message at the expense of the qualities that must characterize the messengers is not a biblical pattern'. It constituted a betrayal to the very identity of the message, since 'spirituality without discipleship in the daily social, economic, and political aspects of life is religiosity and not Christianity'. He challenged the Congress to 'get rid of the false notion that concern for the social implications of the Gospel and the social dimensions of witnessing comes from false doctrine or lack of evangelical conviction'.

At the end of his paper, Escobar became even more explicit,

If as evangelicals we rejected the liberal adaptation of the Gospel to the rationalism of the nineteenth century, we should also reject the adaptation of the Gospel to the social conformism or conservatism of the middle class citizen in the powerful West.¹³

Escobar did not have to wait long for responses and questions to his paper. More than a thousand came in! He agreed that many missionaries were already involved in meeting the basic needs of people around the world but he also mentioned that many of them had received pressure to 'abandon their efforts for the pursuit only of numerical growth of congregations'. Another implicit critique of the Church Growth School? If any had the impression Escobar was proposing a political

revolution, he was careful about leaving no doubts that 'simple liberation from human masters is not the freedom of which the Gospel speaks'. Rather,

Freedom is subjection to Jesus Christ as Lord, deliverance from bondage to sin and Satan and consequently the beginning of new life under the Law of Christ, life in the family of the faith where the old human master becomes also the new brother in Christ.¹⁴

Yet, he added, 'the heart which has been made free with the freedom of Christ cannot be indifferent to the human longings for deliverance from economic, political or social oppression.'

Some people argued that directing efforts to the social implications of the Gospel would result in forgetting evangelism. Escobar disagreed with such a statement. The matter was more than theological. For him, the social gospel had a bad theology, but at the same time, those with the right theology did not apply it to social issues. Right on the money! He could not have been more prophetic.

The discussion of Padilla and Escobar's presentation was intense for quite a while after the Congress. Carl Henry called them 'self-proclaimed champions of radical discipleship'.¹⁵ Regarding the North Americans' reaction to the identification of 'cultural Christianity' with the 'American Way of Life', he said,

Some Americans at Lausanne remarked that it will be time enough to listen to such complaints about evangelical cultural entrapment when Latin Americans put their own house in order. But that response is disappointingly evasive. American evangelicals must learn the importance of social and political criticism at home, even if the reminder emanates from outsiders who seem most ferocious when leveling criticism at situations other than their own.¹⁶

However, when talking about the Latin Americans, Henry considered 'confusing' all their talk about the church being at the forefront of social-economic change because it 'left unsure, however, whether the prospect of present political liberation is an integral facet of the gospel. Nor did they clarify how the life and example of Jesus actually rather than symbolically undergirds such a view'.¹⁷ Were not Padilla and Escobar explicit enough? Was the *Response* unclear? Bishop Jack Dain, Executive Chairman of the Congress, gave a different answer,

I personally recognise that a minority of people in the congress wanted to go further in the direction of radical discipleship, but I think I would have to say that I do not believe the congress was ready to go further.¹⁸

¹² Escobar, 'Evangelism and Man's Search,' 304.

¹³ Escobar, 'Evangelism and Man's Search,' 317.

¹⁴ Escobar, 'Evangelism and Man's Search,' 322.

¹⁵ Carl F. H. Henry, 'The Gospel and Society,' *Christianity Today*, 13 September 1974, 1365.

¹⁶ Henry, 'The Gospel and Society,' 1364.

¹⁷ Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian: An Autobiography* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1986), 349.

¹⁸ Interviewed by Bruce Kaye, Billy Graham Center Archives, 'Collection 46,' Box 32, Folder 32.

Hence, it could be said that Padilla and Escobar were ahead of the times. It was not that their theology was wrong. The North American constituency was not yet ready. They were gripped by plain fear of the so-called 'social gospel' that swept through North America but they forgot, or did not know, their historical battles were not the same as everywhere else. In Latin America the 'social gospel' was never an issue. Although Padilla and Escobar were clearly evangelical by North American standards, their words brought back haunting memories of the past. History dulled the North Americans' hearing and blurred their vision.

John Stott mentioned another factor behind the efforts of North American evangelicals to keep social action at bay: the history of the ecumenical movement.¹⁹ They saw in the ecumenical side of Christianity a denial of the gospel. In the words of Hoekstra, evangelicals felt betrayed by the World Council of Churches (WCC). It was as if 'a plane taking them to Jerusalem had been hijacked and was now bound to Moscow'.²⁰ He explains that 'rather than giving member churches support in their worldwide missionary and evangelistic task, WCC programs have too often tended to divert those churches from that task'.²¹ The meeting in Bangkok less than a year before

Lausanne I was key to the deepening of the precaution.

For example, in spite of the many presentations at Lausanne I with a holistic definition for the mission of the church—Stott, Padilla, Escobar, Green, among others—for Harold Lindsell, Lausanne defined the mission of the church as 'the evangelization of the world'.²² How did he read, for example, section 5 of the Lausanne Covenant? Lindsell claim that Escobar proposed that the Congress' participants get involved in 'the fight for social change, in the overturning of the status quo'. Even after several readings of what Escobar said it is hard to see how could Lindsell support his conclusion. However, he found a way to line up Padilla's presentation with his assessment. For Lindsell, Padilla appeared in the *Time* magazine as an example of Lausanne taking social action seriously 'but not in the way that the ecumenical movement does'.²³

It seemed like the *Covenant* left the question hanging. If it was possible for opposing interpretations, how was the resolution supposed to come? The LCWE together with the World Evangelical Fellowship sponsored the International Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility in Grand Rapids, Michigan, United States, June 1982. Stott described the gathering as a 'demonstration of the value of international conferences'.

19 John Stott, ed., *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 169.

20 Harvey T. Hoekstra, *The World Council of Churches and the Demise of Evangelism* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1979), 109.

21 Hoekstra, *The World Council of Churches and the Demise of Evangelism*, 10.

22 Harold Lindsell, 'Lausanne 74: An Appraisal,' *Christianity Today*, 13 September 1974, 1328.

23 Lindsell, 'Lausanne 74: An Appraisal,' 1329.

When we remain apart from one another, and our only contact with one another is the lobbing of hand grenades across a demilitarized zone, our attitudes inevitably harden and our mental images of each other become stereotyped. But when we meet face to face and listen not only to each other's arguments but to the cherished convictions which lie behind the arguments, then we develop towards one another a new understanding, respect and love. This is not to say that we agreed about everything, but that our agreements are far greater than our residual differences.²⁴

However, in spite of the Consultation's clear challenge to 'call Christians and churches around the world to a more costly commitment to the lost, the needy and the oppressed', the discussion continued unresolved and carried over to Lausanne II. In the years before Manila, the LCWE did not change the programs. It was like nothing had happened. Within the LCWE, Gottfried Osei-Mensah from Ghana and Saphir Athyal from India were supporters of including in the mission of the church evangelism and social responsibility together. At the same time Leighton Ford and David Hesselgrave from the United States pushed for limiting the mission of the church to evangelism alone.²⁵ The latter was the

predominant view in Manila 1989 and that perhaps helps to explain why Padilla and Escobar were not asked to speak to the audience.

But the issues could not be swept under the carpet. A request was granted at Lausanne II for Brazilian Valdir Steuernagel to address the plenary for ten minutes. The main part of his short discourse called the global church to take seriously the political and social commitment of the Lausanne Covenant. He said,

I am afraid that having work mainly with the biblical motive of compassion interpreted through the eyes of a liberal idealistic/individualistic ideology we have created a tradition of 'giving a drink to the thirsty' that does not answer completely neither adequately the needs of many... compassion must be accompanied by another motive, that is *justice*...the Kingdom's justice.²⁶

Even though the Manila Manifesto included a clear reference to the prophetic witness of the church expressed in the 'denunciation of all injustice and oppression, both personal and structural', for Steuernagel the time had come to put it into practice. However, as he explained, 'it seems like we are suffering of a syndrome of cautiousness that paralyzes us'. He added,

How can we keep quiet about millions of abandoned children, degenerating poverty, immorality, and exploitation in our cities? How can

24 Stott, ed., *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989*, 170.

25 Gordon Aeschliman, '¿Fin de la Tierra o Fin de Un Movimiento? Temas Críticos Que Enfrentan a Lausana II,' in *Documentos Puente* (Quito: 1989).

26 Valdir Steuernagel, 'Preguntas a Lausana II,' *Boletín Teológico* 21, no. 35 (1989), 256.

we keep quiet about apartheid, drug trafficking, destruction of nature, and the horrible problem of external debt? We are using time and energy for our in-house discussions while the world goes straight to hell and becomes a hell.²⁷

After two Lausanne Congresses and all the water that has run under the bridge, it is not difficult to see that the discussion has not brought a clear-cut solution. Questions are complex especially when trans-cultural factors are involved. Even after more than three decades, the issues Padilla and Escobar raised at Lausanne I remain current. At least in Latin America the situation is worse than in 1974. Poverty has expanded, violence is rampant, and corruption is endemic, while the evangelical church, in general, has not assumed the challenge of involvement in these issues.

²⁷ Steuernagel, 'Preguntas a Lausana II,' 257.

The hope is that this Congress will move from the trend of previous gatherings. There are small breezes of change.²⁸ It is encouraging to see what the Lausanne Theological Working Group is doing under the leadership of Chris Wright.²⁹ We pray for the wind of the Spirit to take us to new dimensions of incarnation and commitment.

Lausanne III has a great opportunity to affect evangelicals around the world to incarnate the Kingdom's values with compassion and Christian love to people in need. The challenge for Cape Town 2010 is to move from meetings and publications to a solid plan of action so that the 'Whole Church' lives out the 'Whole Gospel' in the 'Whole World'.

²⁸ For example, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *Holistic Mission. Occasional Paper No. 33* (Pattaya, Thailand: 2004).

²⁹ See the October 2007 and January 2009 issues of *Evangelical Review of Theology* with the papers from the February 2007 consultation in Limuru, Kenya and the February 2008 consultation in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Jesus' Questions

Lee Wanak

Key words: Enculturated consciousness, kingdom principles, transformation, hegemonic assumptions, cognitive dissonance, parables.

I Enculturated Consciousness

Jesus used questions as a way of countering the enculturated consciousness of his day. Enculturated consciousness is consciousness shaped by culture and traditions absorbed during our formative years and to a significant degree it programs our everyday behaviour. It can have elements closely aligned with Biblical teaching but also elements that are diametrically opposed to kingdom principles. It often defines who we are and how we view others and the world. It shapes our views of what is good, right and beautiful. It can also be an obstacle to growth, and can marginalize whole groups of people. Jesus sought to crack conventional thinking and move people toward kingdom ways of thinking; from thinking dominated by culture to a worldview centred in God.

Examples of enculturated consciousness abound both in ancient and

in modern times. The ancients typically believed that sickness, poverty, and misfortune were the result of wrong living. Health and wealth were the reward of the righteous. Holiness came to be associated with separation from all that was unclean or impure. Impurity could even come from one's parents. Holiness came to mean separation rather than seeking unity. The Jewish view of Gentiles is another example of enculturated consciousness that Jesus sought to change. In the modern world we enculturate stereotypes involving skin colour, class, ethnic group, place of origin, and gender and use them as markers of character and values. We unknowingly apply these same stereotypes to ourselves.

I did not discover some of my American attitudes until I began working with tribal minorities in Mindanao. Growing up in America, I often heard, 'Work hard and you'll get ahead,' but few thought critically about those who worked hard and didn't get ahead. So we thought if you're poor it's because you didn't work hard. Another example of enculturated consciousness in

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America was manifest destiny—the idea that God wanted America to ‘bless’ the world through its dominance.

I also discovered that there is an enculturated consciousness here in the Philippines. One Bagobo student believed that his people were the ‘true’ Filipinos. Others had deeply enculturated views of their place in society. Those who worked the land often shied away from bringing change saying ‘*mangooma lang ko*’ (I’m just a farmer) or ‘*babaye lang ko*’ (I’m just a woman). The boundaries of *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) were seldom questioned and those who held the power felt justified to use this value to their advantage.

Jesus sought to transform the way people thought about God, about life, themselves and the world around them. By his teaching he sought to develop a consciousness based on the kingdom of God. To deal with the enculturated consciousness of his day Jesus used probing questions, pregnant stories, enigmatic parables, as well as direct experience in transforming the enculturated consciousness of the Jewish people. The purpose of this article is to focus on Jesus’ questions and their relationship to the ministry of teaching.

‘Jesus demanded that his listeners part the veil of conventional wisdom to expose the divine reality that he called the kingdom of God,’¹ to question the common assumptions, and to examine cultural patterns. The coming of the kingdom meant a new way of thinking

and Jesus re-socialized his disciples into these new ways. Some cultural assumptions are just expressions of local preferences, others are diabolical and hegemonic.

Enculturated consciousness—the common assumptions and unquestioned rules of Jewish society—functioned to oppress and exploit the poor among whom Jesus walked.² Jesus’ teaching was situated in the context of an agrarian society in which the ruling aristocracy oppressed the peasants. Conventional wisdom supported the power structure.

Jesus taught ‘new values, new assumptions, new strategies for social and personal transformation.’³ His social aim was to instil in his listeners a ‘transformation of perception,’ a new way of seeing that would replace a consciousness dominated by hegemony of conventional wisdom. Hegemonic assumptions are those that we believe represent commonsense wisdom and that we accept as being in our own interests without realizing that these same assumptions actually work against us in the long term by serving the interests of those opposed to us.⁴

The kingdom also meant a new way of teaching and preaching. Jesus taught that growth progresses from the inside out. He tells a group of Pharisees that they must ‘First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside may also become clean’ (Mt. 23:25-26). He challenged people to think

about how they think. He challenged the people, ‘Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?’ (Lk. 12:57). Why do you rely upon others to determine right from wrong, Jesus seems to ask? Wink understands the developmental implications of this question: ‘Such a challenge requires a maturity in human beings not easily achieved.’⁵

There is a genuine spirituality in examining our enculturated consciousness, both in affirming what is good and confronting what is evil. We cannot and should not just put aside our enculturated patterns, but we should examine them. Jesus, after all, remained a Jew. Mature believers can step back from their culture and themselves and critique from a kingdom perspective. A kingdom perspective allows people to become critical evaluators and redeemers of their culture.

Transformative learning takes place when there is an internal shift in our frame of reference. In the story of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32), the father does not judge his son’s errant behaviour by conventional standards, but rather compassionately and unconditionally welcomes him home. In love this old man sets aside his dignity and *runs* to his prodigal son, hugs and kisses him. In the story of the great feast (Lk. 14:16-24), the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame—in other words the impure and unholy—are invited to dine at a great banquet. Conventional wisdom would have allowed only the healthy and wealthy to participate. In the story of the Pharisee and the publican (Lk. 18:10-14), it is the humble sinner who is favoured by God

over the one who self-righteously adheres to the dictates of custom and law. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31), the conventional understanding of who will go to heaven is reversed.

Perhaps it is in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30-37) that Jesus’ transformational teaching is most apparent. Jesus does not directly answer the question, ‘Who is my neighbour?’ Rather, he redirects attention by asking, ‘Who proved to be neighbour to the man?’⁶ This is the key to discovering Jesus’ transformational intentions. Jesus invites his listeners to distance themselves from the rules and roles of conventional wisdom. Jesus consciously and purposefully taught in a manner designed to transform his listeners’ enculturated consciousness. If Jesus wanted to simply teach neighbourliness his main character would have been a Jew instead of a Samaritan. A neighbour is, ‘even one who is as much an enemy as the Samaritan is a neighbor.’⁷

How do we counter the enculturated consciousness dominant in our churches, schools, and ourselves? Jesus’ questions challenged people to realign their thinking and cultural patterns with the kingdom of God, from worldly thinking to divine wisdom. He used questions and counter questions in a variety of situations and settings throughout the gospels. He was not just concerned with ‘what to think’ but ‘how to think.’ Jesus’ use of questions

¹ Stephen Spear, ‘The Transformation of Enculturated Consciousness in the Teachings of Jesus’, *Journal of Transformative Education* 3 (2005), 357.

² Spear, *Transformation*, 358.

³ Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 135.

⁴ Wink, *Engaging*, 137.

⁵ Wink, *Engaging*, 123.

⁶ Craig Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 231.

⁷ Blomberg, *Interpreting*, 231.

shows that he was not primarily concerned that his listeners acquire knowledge but rather that they change the way they thought; that they be transformed from 'a life in the world of conventional wisdom to a life centered in God.'⁸

Many of the people of Jesus' day were like old wineskins (Lk. 5:36-39), unable to stretch enough to accommodate the new wine of his teaching. They were spiritually moribund, unable to expand their thinking and see beyond the norms of their day. The coming of the kingdom was a hinge point in history yet the hearts and minds of the Jews were like old rusty hinges, unable to move. Jesus often used penetrating questions to provoke thinking. So much of what we focus on has to do with factual knowledge—memory verses or procedural 'how to' patterns. Relatively seldom do we learn to question our own preunderstandings about ourselves, our world, and our roles in demonstrating the kingdom of God. Jesus may have followed a form of Socratic questioning. Socrates taught by asking questions and thus drawing out (Greek, *ex duco*—to lead out, is the root of 'education') answers from his pupils. His overall purpose was to challenge conventional thinking and bring about better understandings.

II What Kinds of Questions Did Jesus Use?

Jesus recognized that developing a new order requires intentionally creating a degree of dis-equilibrium or cognitive

dissonance.⁹ Mezirow calls this process perspective transformation, which usually is triggered by a disconcerting dilemma.¹⁰ Many of Jesus' questions were designed to begin the process of perspective transformation. Jesus asked a lot of questions. We tend to spend a great deal of time on proclamation and not enough time raising questions. In order to think Christianly we must first raise mind-changing questions. Below is a categorization of the kinds of questions Jesus asked.

1 Questions for Focus and Clarification

Jesus asked many questions to give focus and clarification—too many for us to discuss them all. They gave focus to the proceeding discussion. Several times he uses the phrase, 'What do you think?' Or 'What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to?' (Lk. 13:18). Jesus challenged the blind men to verbalize their desire. 'What do you want me to do for you?' (Mt. 20:32). A sick woman touched Jesus' garment seeking healing. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around to the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my clothes?' (Mk. 5:30). This simple question gave focus to an almost imperceptible event.

It was the question, not the event itself, that brought attention to the miracle and the faith of the now healed woman. Jesus' final question to Judas

⁹ Chet Myers, *Teaching Students to Think Critically: A Guide for Faculty of all Disciplines* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988), 14.

¹⁰ Jack Mezirow, *Transformation Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991).

brings tremendous focus and clarity to Judas' actions, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?' (Lk. 22:48). 'Judas, is this really what you want to do?'

Jesus also challenged the temple guard in Gethsemane by calling attention to their inappropriate actions; 'Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs?... But this is your hour when darkness reigns!' (Lk. 22:51). Before the feeding of the four thousand, Jesus asked, 'How many loaves do you have?' 'Seven,' they replied, 'and a few small fish.'" (Mt. 15:34). Again at the feeding of the five thousand Jesus asked, 'How many loaves do you have? When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish"' (Mk. 6:38).

Jesus uses these events later to ask questions on a deeper level. On the road to Emmaus he enters into the discussion asking the disciples, 'What are you discussing together as you walk along?' (Lk. 24:17). In each case Jesus' question gives focus and clarity to what is to come.

2 Questions from Deep Disappointment

Jesus often challenged his disciples to evaluate their own dullness and lack of understanding. After feeding the five thousand and the four thousand Jesus chided, 'Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?' (Mk. 8:17). Jesus questions, at times, had a judgmental tone. When his disciples could not heal an epileptic boy Jesus commented, 'O unbelieving and perverse generation,... How long should I put up with you?' (Mt. 17:17).

Sometimes his questions echoed deep disappointment. In Gethsemane he chided his disciples, 'Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?' (Mt. 26:40). At times his questions were deeply biting. Ending his seven woes sermon he chided the spiritual leaders, 'You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?' (Mt. 23:33).

Disappointed over Nicodemus's lack of spiritual insight, he asked, 'You are Israel's teacher, and do you not understand these things?' (Jn. 3:10). Nicodemus is confused but Jesus expected more of him. 'I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?' (Jn. 3:12). Disappointed over the spiritual dullness of the people he shouts, 'Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?' (Lk. 12:56).

He compares the Jews lack of obedience to a builder who built a house on sand. 'Why do you call me, "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I say?' (Lk. 12:46). His words were meant to be like a foundation in rock, but many chose to build their lives on sand. During his crucifixion Jesus expresses deep disappointment over the state of humankind. 'For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?' (Lk. 23:31). He is saying, if people do these things while I am with them, what will they do during evil times?

3 Questions Challenging Tradition and Authority

Criticizing the religious leaders for their spiritual blindness, Jesus asks, 'Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?' (Lk. 6:39). Jesus entered into a number of controversies with the Pharisees over appropriate behaviour on the Sabbath. The conventional wisdom of the day had turned the Sabbath into a burden instead of a blessing. During one of these Sabbath controversies Jesus heals a man and asks the synagogue, 'Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' (Mk. 3:4).

After healing a crippled woman on the Sabbath the Pharisees again were indignant. Jesus shows their inconsistency saying, 'Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water?' (Lk. 12:15). Later he gets directly to the point, demanding their response, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?' (Lk. 14:3). The same inconsistency is brought out by Jesus' question, 'If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?' (Lk. 14:5).

First century Judaism regulated a host of religious behaviours with which Jesus took issue, including fasting, ethnic and gender barriers, the use of the temple for commercial purposes and other applications of the Law. When Jesus is asked why he and his disciples do not fast, he answers with an analogy embedded in a question: 'How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is still with them?' (Mt. 9:15). His question is cryptic but thought provok-

ing, comparing his presence to that of being with one's newly married close friend. Challenging ethnic and gender barriers he simply asks a Samaritan woman, 'Will you give me a drink?' (Jn. 4:7) and as a result a whole town is converted. As he cleansed the temple of the moneychangers, he said, 'Is it not written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations," but you have made it "a den of robbers?"' (Mk. 11:17). Their tradition of money changing in the Court of the Gentiles was in contradiction to God's global kingdom purposes.

In the story of the woman caught in adultery the Pharisees sought to advance their strict interpretation of the Law. Jesus asked the woman, 'Where are they? Has no one condemned you?' (Jn. 8:10) and that day mercy reigned over Law. Jesus, concerned with the Pharisees twisted understanding of the Law, asks a rhetorical question, 'Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law' (Jn. 7:19). He brings them to recognize their own hypocrisy—so much focus on the law but without following it themselves.

The kingdom required faithful workers so Jesus challenged the religious leaders regarding their failures. In the parable of the evil tenants he makes the Pharisees condemn themselves for not respecting the owner of the vineyard (God the Father himself) and for killing His Son. He asks, 'Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' (Mt. 21:40).

Conversely Jesus' disciples are to be faithful servants always ready for the Lord's return. 'Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master

puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?' (Lk. 12:42). Unlike the religious leaders of the day, Jesus' disciples were to conduct themselves as a faithful household manager attending to his duties.

4 Questions about his own Nature and Identity

Gauging the disciples' understanding of his messiahship Jesus asked, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' (Mt. 16:13). 'Who do you say I am?' (Mt. 16:15). This question led to Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah. After Jesus called himself 'the Bread of Life coming down from heaven' (Jn. 6:58), his disciples were disgruntled. He asked them, 'Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before?' (Jn. 6:61-62). By asking this question he sets the stage for authenticating his claim. After healing the paralytic Jesus said to the Pharisees, 'Which is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven" or to say, "Get up and walk?"' (Mt. 9:5). Neither is easy to say, but one is more identifiable than the other. This incident connected Jesus' healing ministry as proof of his ability to forgive sin.

Jesus questioned the Pharisees who said his power was demonic, 'If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How can his kingdom stand?' (Mt. 12:26). The kingdom of God is diametrically opposed to the kingdom of Satan. To claim the work of God as the work of Satan is blasphemy. Jesus is using simple logic to show their thinking is self-contradictory.

After Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant Jesus asks him,

'Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?' (Jn. 18:11). In other words, Peter, don't you understand, as Messiah I came for this time of suffering? On the road to Emmaus he asks the disciples, 'Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' (Lk. 24:26). These questions were designed by Jesus to guide the disciples' thinking regarding his true identity. So often we make evangelistic proclamations without helping people raise the appropriate questions. A question approach may receive grater resonance with people.

5 Questions Challenging Values

Regarding materialism Jesus challenged his disciples, 'What good would it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?' (Mt. 16:26). Questions like this challenge our fundamental values and help us realign our thinking and behaviour toward kingdom values.

Regarding forgiveness Jesus asks, 'If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away will he not leave the 99 on the hills and go look for the one that wandered off?' (Mt. 18:12, Lk 15:4). This parable is applied to two groups: the powerless, i.e. the 'little ones,' and the sinners. Jesus uses the common shepherding practice to show the importance of restoration as kingdom ministry. The same kind of question is asked regarding the parable of the woman who has lost a coin. 'Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?' (Lk. 15:8).

After telling the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus queries, Who was 'a neighbour to the man who fell into the

hands of the robbers?' (Lk. 10:36). He raises consciousness regarding neighbourliness but by making a Samaritan the hero he challenges Jewish racial biases. In the same vein he asks, 'If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?' (Mt. 5:46-47). Jesus healed ten lepers but only one, a Samaritan, returns and is profusely thankful. Jesus asked, 'Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?' (Lk. 17:17). Again the focus on a foreigner confronts the enculturated consciousness of the day.

Criticizing the Pharisees for their emphasis on outward forms of holiness but harbouring wickedness inside, Jesus chides, 'Did not the one who made the outside [of the cup] make the inside also?' (Lk. 11:40). The Pharisees valued outward appearances but neglected inward holiness. Jesus' question shows the importance of both. Their shallow focus affected their faith. Jesus asked, 'How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?' (Jn. 5:44).

The Jews believed there was a direct correlation between the degree of one's suffering or blessing and the depth of one's sin or righteousness. They valued the 'good life' because it showed the blessing of God. Pilate had killed some Galileans and used their blood in a pagan sacrifice. Conventional wisdom probably emphasized something regarding punishment for hidden sin. Thus Jesus asks, 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse

sinner than all the other Galileans because they suffered in this way?' (Lk. 13:2).

Religious values focused more on being served than on serving. Jesus sought to reverse the hierarchical values of both Jewish and Gentile societies with his example of servanthood. He asks [and answers], 'Who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves?.... But I am among you as one who serves' (Lk. 22:27). In applying the parable of the sheep and goats, Jesus asks, 'Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?"' (Mt. 25:37). With this question Jesus connects righteousness with servanthood rather than status.

The Pharisees valued judging others. 'Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?' (Mt. 7:3). Jesus is not saying don't make judgments. He is saying we cannot make godly judgments unless we deal with the attitudes, biases and sins that cloud our own vision.

6 Questions that are Evasive

Jesus sometimes answered questions with questions to show the Pharisees their own inconsistency. When asked about the source of his authority Jesus does not answer directly. 'I will also ask you one question. If you answer me I will tell you' (Mt. 21:24). Jesus then asks a question to corner the Pharisees. 'John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?' Mt. 21:24). If John's authority is from God and he pointed people to Jesus, then Jesus' authority

must also be from God. The Pharisees cannot answer without incriminating themselves.

The Pharisees, trying to trip Jesus up with their carefully formulated questions, ask him if it's right to pay taxes to Caesar. A yes or a no answer would have delighted the Pharisees. To a Jew God was their only king, to pay a tax to another king is an insult to God. Jesus shows a coin and asks, 'Who's portrait is on it? And who's inscription?' (Mt. 22:20, Mk. 12:13-17). In so doing he doesn't answer their question but he recognizes both the authority of God and of Caesar. This response shaped the thinking of Simon (the Zealot for Jewish independence) who later wrote, 'fear God, honour the king' (1 Pet. 2:17).

7 Questions to Activate Faith and Commitment

Jesus tested the faith of the blind and mute, asking first, 'Do you believe I am able to do this?' (Mt. 9:28). After healing the man born blind Jesus asks, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' (Jn. 9:35). After calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus asks his disciples, 'Where is your faith?' (Lk. 8:25). At the grave of Lazarus Jesus tells Martha, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me... will never die. Do you believe this?' (Jn. 11:25-26). Each of these questions activate faith by giving focus to God's work in specific contexts.

Jesus was criticized by Simon the Pharisee for allowing a 'sinful woman' to anoint his feet. Jesus told a short story of a man who owed a small amount and a man who owed ten times more. The moneylender forgave both

debts. Then he asked Simon the Pharisee, 'Now which of them will love him more?' (Lk. 7:42). Assuming Simon understood he would have realized this 'sinful woman' was expressing her love to the One who forgave her great debt. After the Apostle Peter's three-fold denial the resurrected Jesus asks him three times, 'Simon do you love me?' (Jn. 21:15-17). The thrice repeated question perhaps demonstrated Jesus' full forgiveness of the three-fold denial.

On counting the cost of discipleship Jesus uses question parables to challenge his audience. 'Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost...?' (Lk. 14:28). The same idea is found in his question, 'Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able...?' (Lk. 14:31). Talking to his disciples about his suffering, he asked, 'Can you drink of the cup I am going to drink?' (Mt. 20:22). Jesus questioned Peter, 'Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!' (Jn. 13:38).

There were massive injustices in ancient Israel—a land dominated by a colonial power, a land where the great majority were peasants and a few are wealthy and powerful. In the story of the persistent widow and the unjust judge Jesus asks, 'And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night?' (Lk. 18:6). He challenges them to persistently look to the One who brings justice.

In a poor land daily provision is a test of faith. Jesus reminds his disci-

ples of their faith experiences, 'When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?' (Lk. 22:35). They answered, 'No.' In his Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:26-31) Jesus asks a series of probing questions on faith and provision.

Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Of course the same message could have been given in a declarative mode but Jesus chose questions to ignite their own thinking. Faith in this sense is not blind but rather a reasoned choice. After seeing the same miracle twice Jesus seeks to consolidate the disciples faith. 'When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?' 'Twelve,' they replied. 'And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?' They answered, 'Seven' (Mk. 8:19-20). Jesus' questions point them to their own experiences as a basis for their faith.

8 Deeply Penetrating Questions

Jesus' first question as a boy in the temple is at first glance curious, but eventually deeply insightful for his parents. This question sets the stage for

his future ministry. 'Why were you searching for me?' he asked. 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?' (Lk. 2:49). This is not the snide remark of a budding teenager. At this event, his first Passover, the twelve-year-old Jesus became a 'son of the law.' During the Passover the Sanhedrin was available in the temple to dialogue with the public and the young Jesus amazed them with his insights. Jesus is saying his parents should have known where he was. His query to his parents also demonstrates a growing sense of his own identity, distinguishing between his Father—God, and his father—Joseph.

Showing his solidarity with the people of the kingdom, Jesus used a rhetorical question, 'Who is my mother and who are my brothers?' (Mt. 12:48). He answers gesturing to his disciples, 'See, my mother and my brothers.' (Mt. 12:49). As many of us have experienced, Jesus' family did not share his vision. Jesus' question reminds us that we have two families, one biological and one spiritual. Our solidarity must ultimately be with our spiritual brothers and sisters.

About to be stoned by the unbelieving Jews, Jesus challenged, 'I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?' (Jn. 10:32). Jesus had just claimed that he is one with the Father, making himself equal with God. His question brings to a head his claims. He is challenging the Jews, if you don't believe my claim, believe the works I do.

The most penetrating question Jesus asked was on the cross, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mt. 27:46). The Gospel itself is, of

course, the answer to Jesus' question. Jesus simultaneously experiences the agony of human suffering and the depth of separation from God as he took on the sin of mankind.

III How do Jesus' Questions Teach us to Teach?

Certainly much has been written on Jesus' teaching style. Seminary students often say they want to teach as Jesus did. They usually do not consider the contextual nature of his teaching style, not realizing that if he were teaching in today's world with its many cultures and people groups, his style would likely be varied. Nonetheless there are some more-or-less universal principles we can deduce from a study of his questions.

1. *Provoke Kingdom Thinking:* A change of thinking and behaviour often requires penetrating questions that expose our own shallowness. Just as Jesus used questions to provoke kingdom thinking, we need to guide people beyond their enculturated consciousness. A teacher might ask, 'What are signs of the Kingdom around our community?'
2. *Seek Transformation:* Ask questions that help move people toward personal and social transformation. 'How might we make this community look a little more like heaven?'
3. *Address the 'Why' Questions:* So much teaching in our churches has to do with the 'what' and 'how' of church culture. Use questions to get to the 'why' issues of the Christian life. 'Why do we find

so much division among Christian groups?'

4. *Laggards:* Some people will always prefer old wineskins. It is unlikely they will embrace the new. Focus on people who are interested in bringing kingdom changes to their world. 'What new things would God have us do for his Kingdom this year?'
5. *Deep Issues:* Use questions to bring focus and clarification to the deep issues of the Christian life. 'Why is it that there are some areas of our lives and personalities that we don't seem to be able to change?'
6. *Disappointment:* Jesus used questions to express deep disappointment. Though we need to exercise care, this kind of question is meant to be a wake-up call for our calcified congregations. Habakkuk begins his oracle, 'How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?'
7. *Challenge Tradition:* Jesus used questions to challenge tradition and authority that ran counter to kingdom values. Though we should choose our battles carefully we should not shirk from our responsibility by preaching nice homilies. 'Are our traditions alienating unbelievers? The younger generation?'
8. *Evangelistic Questions:* Jesus used questions as an invitation to probe his nature and identity. Connected with stories this method is an excellent evangelistic tool. 'If Jesus were here today what would he be like and what would be his message?'
9. *Detractors:* We will always have

detractors. Questions that are evasive may provoke thought and eventually win our detractors. 'That's a good question. I'm not sure how to answer. What do you think?'

10. *Activate Faith*: Jesus used questions to activate faith and commitment. Jesus wanted people to

make up their own minds. He nurtured their thinking by challenging conventional wisdom and setting the stage for spiritual growth. 'Do you believe that God can change our city? What role do you see the church playing to bring change?'

Book Review Article

Restoring, Reforming, Renewing: Accompaniments to *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*¹

Amos Yong

THE *CCET* BEGINS with an introductory essay by Timothy Larsen wrestling with and proposing a working definition of 'evangelical' for this project; the remaining seventeen essays are divided into two parts: the first on 'doctrines' has eight essays (on Trinity, scripture, Christ, theological anthropology, justification/atonement, Holy Spirit, conversion/sanctification, and ecclesiology) while the second on "contexts" has nine essays (on culture, gender, race, the religions, and evangelical theology in, respectively, Africa, Asia, Britain/Europe, Latin America, and North America). The perspectives of eighteen different essayists, including four women, from a range of evangeli-

cal backgrounds—Reformed, Wesleyan, Pentecostal, Baptist, etc.—are registered in the book.

One way to read the *CCET* is as a performative speech act in three keys: a restorative one oriented to the past, a reformative one focused on the present, and a renewal one hopeful about the future. Sometimes one of these keys is out of harmony with the other two, but taken together, I suggest they reflect the opportunities and challenges of the ongoing task of contemporary evangelical theology as a live project. Let me explain.

Restoring

First, the restorative key should come to no surprise for a book on evangelical theology. Given evangelicalism's institutional emergence from out of the fundamentalist side of the fundamentalist-modernist controversies in the first half of the twentieth century, evangelical theology has always been conserv-

¹ Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier, *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). All quotations from this volume will be referenced parenthetically in the text by *CCET* and page number.

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ative as opposed to liberal. My point here is not to nit-pick about the definition of conservative or liberal, but to simply observe that, as many of the authors of this book put it, evangelical theology is not first and foremost progressive or revisionist, but restorationist: looking to retrieve the past, especially the creedal tradition, or the Reformational one, or the revivalist one of the eighteenth century, etc.² As restorationist in this sense, it makes sense to look to evangelical theology to emphasize remaining faithful to the theological traditions of the past, to restate them, and perhaps even to merely repeat them (as would be involved in the recitation of Nicene confession). This is not to denigrate evangelical theology but to suggest how such restorationism may signal its strength. If so, then to find the *CCET* repeating, or restating, or attempting to restore previous formulations and perhaps give them life for the present time—this is precisely what one would expect.

And this is what we do find both at the structural and at other levels. Structurally, the volume carries on the tradition of evangelical theology that has become standard in the last one hundred-plus years, including the sequence of doctrinal loci in part I that contains relatively few surprises. Yet why divide the volume into the two

parts of “doctrine” and “contexts,” especially when you have admissions in the first part that evangelical doctrines are already contextually shaped (e.g., *CCET* 27, 43) as well as the repeated calls in part two to contextualize (in non-Western areas) received doctrines (usually derived from the Western traditions)? I’m certainly not saying disband with doctrines and forget about contextualization. Rather, I am complaining about the implicit message conveyed in the structure of the book that part I constitutes the doctrinal heart of evangelical theology while part II presents its applications, translations, and vernacularizations. Alternatively, the present arrangement also communicates, at least implicitly that part I presents universal truths that have been believed by all evangelicals everywhere and at all times while part II either provides (merely) historical description or addresses the missional dimension of evangelical theology. In fact, one of the essayists even suggest that evangelical theology can be understood in terms of a scriptural or gospel core (the doctrines) which, as structurally unfolded in the volume itself, can then be packaged and presented in many different ways in various contexts (*CCET* 215, 218, 222n5).

Finally, at the methodological level, the more traditional evangelical starting point of scriptural reflection is found in at least a few of essays (e.g., on theological anthropology, justification/atonement, and conversion/sanctification). This is not to dismiss the proposals presented in these essays, but rather to simply observe this is what one would expect in evangelical theological approaches. In fact, it is a wonder that there is not much more of

this by others in the essays in part I of the volume, and this itself is noteworthy about how to understand both the *CCET* in particular and the shape of evangelical theology today in general.

Reforming

In fact, I was pleasantly surprised that the efforts to reform evangelical theology in the *CCET* were more substantive than I had anticipated. For example, Kevin Vanhoozer’s theodramatic hermeneutic and theological method takes seriously the narrative aspects of human understanding, while D. Stephen Long engages with conversations regarding deification and the “new perspective on Paul” in his essay.³ There are chapters on topics such as culture, gender, race, and religious pluralism that in the previous generation were not registered in evangelical theological reflection. And the attention to the contextual character of evangelical theology also marks an increasing sensitivity to the reformational task of doing theology.

There are two specific essays that I want to comment on further with regard to the reformational thread of the *CCET*. First, Elaine Storkey’s essay at least takes a stand on a disputed issue in evangelical theology: on behalf of an egalitarian view of gender over and against the complementarian perspective. Her approach is not necessarily novel, and her specific strat-

egy—of appealing to the relationality of the trinitarian identity of God—is itself questioned elsewhere in the volume (e.g., by Vanhoozer’s query about whether the turn to relationality itself is a selling of the evangelical soul to another master; *CCET* 34n55). My point is that given how volatile this issue remains across the spectrum of the evangelical theological landscape, as well as the predominantly patriarchal character of much of evangelicalism in the global south, this is indeed a reformist stance within the evangelical context (even if such an option may be ‘old hat’ in ‘liberal’ circles since the age of women’s suffrage!).

Much more radical (and easily the most enjoyable essay in the book for me) is J. Kameron Carter’s discussion of race and theology.⁴ Carter does not assume theology always proceeds from a core that is then translated into a racialized (or any other) context (as a restorationist approach would attempt). Instead, he asks how the experience of race itself emerges out of and then also informs a theological vision—a much more dialectical, and maybe even correlational, conception. More precisely, the essay explores ‘how black folks’ reception of the religion of their masters represents a counter-performance of American evangelicalism itself’ (*CCET* 178), and argues that ‘Evangelical belief was received by persons of African descent “who made Jesus their choice” so as to

2 Thus I am using the ‘restorationist’ motif in a general sense rather than in any kind of specific sense such as that embraced by the Churches of Christ or Disciples tradition; the latter involves a specific scriptural hermeneutic—which may be included in the former, but not necessarily so.

3 The choice to assign Long to write on justification and atonement is itself a puzzling one when he’s been doing creative and important work in ecclesiology, theology of culture, and theology of economics.

4 Carter’s new book, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford University Press, 2008), is a must read for those interested in the future of evangelical theology in general and in Christian theology in general.

bear witness to a different, non-triumphalist Christian reality' (*CCET* 190). The genius of Carter's essay is that the good news of the *evangelion* itself is realized only in and through the Holy Saturday of the black evangelical bodily experience of slavery, lynching, and death.⁵ There is much more to think about here regarding Latino/a and Asian approaches to evangelical theology.

In her essay, Storkey suggests that 'an evangelical theology of gender can only be developed by unearthing presuppositions in all these areas [i.e., the doctrines of creation, *imago Dei*, sin, redemption, ecclesiology, and others]' (*CCET* 167). Her efforts then proceed to sketch, in a very programmatic sense, what kinds of reforming is required for evangelical theology to transition from a complementarian to an egalitarian position. Following out the logic of Storkey's and Carter's essays would require an equally massive rethinking about central Christian doctrines like christology, the atonement, and soteriology. In fact, these doctrinal categories themselves may not even survive the reformation that ensues in (especially) Carter's train—at least not in the same format or structure as that which the restorationist tradition of evangelical theology would probably seek to preserve.

⁵ Carter's discussion of the Holy Saturday motif is different from that of Von Balthasar or Alan Lewis precisely because its dogmatic content is not just merely read from out of the scriptural account but is filled in from out of the palpable encounter of black evangelicals with the gospel. Compare, e.g., Lewis' *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

Renewing

While Storkey and Carter articulate why and how evangelical theology needs to be reformed—i.e., so that evangelical praxis can be better performed—their efforts raise questions about the trajectory of the future of evangelical theology. The *CCET* recognizes not only that evangelicalism is a global phenomenon, but also that there are a multiplicity of voices under that tent, some of which may cause seismic shifts in evangelical theological reflection. While this may be of concern to restorationists, there are some voices which call for a more dialogical approach (*CCET* 45), and insist that 'for the full truth, all the genuinely insightful voices must be spoken and heard together' (*CCET* 49n42). Herein lies the recognition that evangelicalism should not only be counting the numbers in their churches and organizations but that evangelical theology should be listening to and even internalizing what is being said.

The essays in part II represent the initial steps of registering evangelical perspectives from the global south. Part of the result is a willingness to entertain 'new possibilities' for evangelical theology in dialogue with primal traditions (*CCET* 233); an openness to the influence of culture and society in evangelical theology (*CCET* 256); and even the courage to risk the cross-fertilization of evangelicalism across racial, national, linguistic, and cultural lines (*CCET* 271). Will such postures of renewal enable the reformation of the doctrinal loci represented in part I of the book as well as the new performance of their correlated practices? Does this represent a

genuinely forward-looking orientation among evangelical theologians that may, perhaps, get us beyond the conservative/liberal (or restorationist/progressive) dichotomy?

Even the 'dogmaticians' (used here in reference to the authors of the 'doctrine' chapters in part I) acknowledge the unfinished and dynamic nature of evangelical theological reflection. Are evangelical serious in saying, 'The label "evangelical" is the statement of an ambition—to correspond to the gospel—rather than an achievement. Similarly, "God of the gospel" names a project, not a finished product' (*CCET* 18)? Is the strategy of asking questions—in some cases many of them in succession (*CCET* 101)—merely a rhetorical ploy or in effect a reflection of a genuine openness, curiosity, and quest to renew evangelical theology in anticipation of the time when we shall no longer see through a glass dimly? If the latter, then herein are manifest humble approaches to the theological task.⁶

⁶ Some would be concerned that too much humility betrays instead a loss of conviction; I would suggest instead that it takes boldness to ask the hard questions of our time. This is precisely what drives what I have elsewhere called a theology of quest; see Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Burlington, VT, and Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, and Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), esp. ch. 1.

Hence, these restorationist, reformationist, and renewal strands of the *CCET* can be interpreted as representing the conflicted nature of evangelicalism in general and evangelical theology in particular, or they can be seen to reflect the pluralism within evangelicalism which bodes well for its future. As a pentecostal theologian, I resonate with my evangelical friends and their wrestling with the theological task since my own pentecostal tradition also has restorationist, reformationist, and renewal streams.⁷ I think each is necessary, even if my intuitions are to look ahead even while not neglecting to look left, right, and to the rear before making one's move.⁸

⁷ I document some of these in my *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

⁸ An earlier version of this paper was presented to the 'Contesting Evangelicalism' panel of the Christian Theological Research Fellowship (CTRF) at the American Academy of Religion, Chicago, Illinois, 1-3 November 2008. Thanks to D. Stephen Long, president of CTRF, for the invitation to be a part of this panel.

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An Agenda for Change: a global call for spiritual and social transformation

Joel Edwards

Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008

ISBN 978-0-310-28400-0

Hb pp136

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

Agenda for Change is the legacy of Joel Edwards after two decades of top level leadership in the Evangelical Alliance

movement in Great Britain and globally. It was the subject matter for a series of seminars around UK in the closing stages of the author's directorship of EA UK and the topic for stirring plenary address at the 12th General Assembly of the World Evangelical Alliance in Pattaya, Thailand, October 2008.

In fewer than one hundred pages, he makes a reasoned, informed and passionate plea for the credible presentation of Christ in the modern world and for evangelicals to be known as the "good news people" that they should be. Despite the fact that the Christian faith (and evangelism in particular) is under pressure

and even declining in some areas, Edwards believes that this is not the time to "tip toe" around, but to step forward with confidence, "reclaiming the idea we are called to a long-term vision for spiritual and social change."

Edwards, now International Director for the Micah Challenge, has no doubt that despite all the speculation and opinions that have emerged over the centuries, Jesus is credible in himself, both in the claims that he made, and in relation to others in this multi-religious world. So it is a matter of allowing these claims to be put forward simply, with humility and respect for others, and not allowing our petty problems and programs to interfere.

This will mean the church will need to re-focus itself—with a greater devotion to the Word, an openness to the way God is at work in the world, behaving with integrity and developing the art of communicating this message in appropriate ways, remembering that in today's world Jesus the conversationalist may be a better model than some we have relied on in the past.

In the second part of the book, the author tackles the term "evangelical" (left, right and centre versions) well aware that it has lost currency with many. But he believes it is possible and necessary to rehabilitate it as enshrining the heart of the Christian gospel in a biblical and Christ-centred manner.

With a renewed conviction about Christ and his message, the spiritually and socially transformative power of the gospel can be unleashed; Christians will then become known as good citizens in a needy world that is looking for the reality of true faith and practice—precisely because they incarnate the gospel and put kingdom values ahead of all others, as they have so often done in the past to good effect

This book should, as the author hopes, be "picked up by Christians everywhere who wish to be part of the great unfolding Christian story" because "the church has been "sent out to advice the Kingdom of God, not with a defensive posture but as servants of transforming good news."

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How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: rediscovering the African seedbed of western Christianity

Thomas C. Oden

Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2007

ISBN: 978-0-8308-2875-3

Hb, pp 204, bibliog.

*Reviewed by James Nkansah-Obrempong,
Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of
Theology, Kenya*

How Africa shaped the Christian Mind is gripping and inspiring book. The title catches the eye of any person with an inquisitive mind. The subtitle: *Rediscovering the seedbed of western Christianity* is the focus of the book. Oden asserts that the classic Christian mind (the Christian intellectual history) was extensively shaped by the African imagination—its philosophy, moral insights, ideas, literary works, discipline and scriptural interpretation. These ideas were first developed or produced on the African soil before they reached the west.

The book is divided into three sections: Introduction; Part One: The African Seedbed of Western Christianity: this section covers chapters 1-5; Part two: African Orthodoxy Recovery—which covers chapters 6-9. Part two also includes an appendix dealing with the challenges of early African research and a useful literary chronology of Christianity in Africa in the first millennium, and a bibliography

on both African Christianity and theology. The author, however, does not make any reference to the bibliography in the text of the book.

Oden points out in the Introduction that early African Christian heritage had great impact on both Christian and world history. He states that 'Africa played a decisive role in the formation of western culture' and he claims these 'Decisive intellectual achievements of Christianity were explored and understood first in Africa before they were recognized in Europe and a millennium before they found their way to North America.' He suggests that 'Much intellectual history flowed south to north,' from Africa to Europe and not the other way round. He demonstrates this pattern in the book but calls for further textual demonstration to affirm his hypothesis.

In Part One and the chapters that follow, Oden develops his thesis by pointing out seven critical ways Africa shaped the western mind: (1) developing modern western university, (2) maturing Christian exegesis of scripture, (3) shaping early Christian dogma—such as sin and grace, creation and providence, atonement, eschatology, baptism and the life of prayer, (4) modeling conciliar patterns of ecumenical decision-making, (5) stimulating early monasticism, (6) developing Neo-Platonism and (7) refining rhetorical and dialectical skills. Other contributions from African Christianity include the preservation of Christian Scriptures, ancestral traditions, and liturgical practices and he challenges African Christians to value and appreciate their own intellectual history.

He underscores the importance and the need for African scholars to make use of the early African intellectual patristic heritage for African theology, an issue Kwame Bediako has also alluded to in his

work, *Theology and Identity*.

Oden makes a strong case by defending the 'Africanness' of the great intellectuals like Athanasius, Augustine and Cyprian and rejects common notions that these men were not 'Africans at all, but merely Europeans in disguise.' This may surprise many people but it is important to acknowledge the central place Africa occupies in salvation history and the contributions it has made to Christianity in the past and will make in the future.

In part two, Oden calls on African Christians to recovery African Orthodoxy. He challenges African Christians to reclaim their classical African past—the seed of African orthodoxy which, he argues, expresses apostolic faith and teachings and is buried in the soil of Africa; it requires multifaceted, interdisciplinary approaches to recover this truth. He thinks it will take a generation of disciplined investigation and rigorous language studies to enable African scholars to study these primary sources since most of these materials are written in languages other than English.

He dares young Africans to rediscover, reevaluate, and claim the textual riches of Ancient African Christianity which have been ignored by both African and Western scholars and church leaders and to make these materials accessible to the African Church. He thinks there is much wisdom Christians can learn from these early Christians in relation to faith, courage, tenacity, suffering, hope and remarkable intellectual strength.

I find his overall argument in the book thought provoking and stimulating. His affirmation of Africa's intellectual history and his claim that 'African Traditional Religion' must be seen as having both oral and written history is interesting and helpful although most Africans will not extend African Traditional Religion to

cover Christianity and Islam as Oden insinuates. His claim that Christianity is traditional to Africa is perceptive and must be given serious thought.

Oden raises some critical relationship issues between Christianity and Islam. While I agree with him that Christians need to study Islam, its history, scriptures and doctrines to understand it, I doubt if his suggestion to seek reconciliation of Islam and Christianity through historical insight is possible. There are very critical and fundamental faith issues that are not reconcilable in the two religions. The issues hinge on the foundational truth of the Christian faith. As long as these differences exist, there will always be tensions between Christianity and Islam.

This book is stimulating and thought provoking. It is a much needed correction to those notions that demean Africa's intellectual history and a major contribution to world Christianity. It is a book every African theologian, biblical scholar, historian and church leader must read!

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To The Jew First : the case for Jewish evangelism in Scripture and History

edited by Darrell L Bock and Mitch Glaser

Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008
ISBN 978-0-8254-3658-1
Pb pp 347

Reviewed by David Parker, Editor,
Evangelical Review of Theology

This book consists of papers delivered at conferences held in the United States in 2000 sponsored by Chosen People Ministries (formerly American Board of

Mission to the Jews) whose President, Mitch Glaser is co-editor and provides an overall introduction to the volume. There is an attempt at imposing some order and focus on the diverse material by dividing the book into three parts—biblical, theological and missiological, with appropriate summaries and outlines; however the areas are not very well demarked in the material and the concluding paper bears rather obvious marks of the new millennium context of the original conferences. Nevertheless it is worthwhile to have available the insights of some well known scholars (including Darrell Bock as co-editor and contributor, Arthur Glasser, Michel Rydellnik, Craig Blaising and Walter Kaiser, who also writes the Foreword) on the important and vexed question of Jewish evangelism.

Part Three dealing with missiology presents four chapters with practical information about methods and programs of Jewish evangelism, referring especially to the successes in 19th century and the between-wars period of the 20th century; there is also here and elsewhere advice on strategies (such as the use of messianic prophecy) and attitudes that are relevant to successful Jewish evangelism today.

In the Theological section, there is a useful paper from a Reformed perspective by Richard L. Pratt which offers good insights explaining why churches from this tradition have been so prominent in the past (although noticeably absent today) in the work of Jewish evangelism. But the matching paper from the dispensational perspective only discusses why Jewish evangelism is to be a priority, based on the words 'to the Jew first' in Romans 1:16, rather than addressing many other questions that arise in relation to this tradition.

Barry R. Levanthal (a messianic believer)

focuses on the implications of the holocaust for Jewish evangelism. While acknowledging the extreme sensitivities involved, he nonetheless expresses his conviction that 'Jewish history and prophecy alike demonstrate that God is playing out the great drama of his Sacred Romance on the stage of Jewish suffering' and 'God's megaphone of pain and suffering, demonstrated in Israel's past and future holocausts, have drawn—and will continue to draw—our Jewish people back into the divine reality.'

The Biblical section covers a range of issues which are relevant for many different aspects of the topic. For example, David L. Turner tackles anti-Semitism by showing that the strong words of Jesus in Matthew 23 offer no basis for a harsh negative view of Jews by the Gentile Christian. This is because it is clear that, when they are set in the context of the Hebrew prophets and contemporary Jewish religious life, they reflect a 'vigorous intramural dispute between one Jew and other Jews over the identity of the Jew Jesus.'

Bock's chapter examines Acts (especially key speeches in chapters 2, 3, and 13) showing that it was not the messianic fulfilment or the atoning work of Christ that was the focus of early Jewish evangelism but the exaltation of Jesus in the resurrection. This approach, which is also found in the important opening verses of Romans with its stress on what qualifies Jesus to be seen as Messiah and the one through whom God will dispense his promised blessings to his people, has the potential to open up a fruitful strategy for Jewish evangelism today.

Throughout these papers several other important themes are presented including two covenant theology (Kjaer-Hansen's concluding paper), as well as replacement and parenthetical theology. The impor-

tance of hermeneutics is obvious in several places (especially by Blaising), as is the place of messianic prophecy. But perhaps the most common and fundamental theme is the place of Israel and the relationship between the Jews and Christians in the plan of salvation, particularly as seen in the Romans 9-11. The view is repeated in many ways that the salvation of Gentiles is intimately related to the promise of God to the Jews

As Walter Kaiser puts it in the Introduction, 'the so-called Gentile church does not have any grounding if it does not find itself grafted into the roots of the patriarchal promises... A church cut off from Israel is a church that merely floats in the air with no past, no grounding, and no promises.' There is 'only one unified plan of redemption that embraces all who put their trust in Messiah.' Furthermore, as many of the papers emphasise, according to Paul there is a dynamic relationship between the evangelisation of Gentiles and the evangelisation of Jews for it is only when the full number of the Gentiles is made up that the Jewish people will enter into the divine blessing. Similarly, there is more than a historical priority indicated in the words of Paul which give the book its title—Gentile mission is dependent on Jewish mission, and both Jews and Gentiles together make up the people of God. These are important but sometimes controversial issues which deserve more examination, but whether this book can become a standard text book its sponsors intend is another matter.

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The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative

Christopher J. H. Wright

Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006.

ISBN: 978-1-84474-152-6
Hb, 581 pp., bibliog., indices

*Reviewed by Walter McConnell, (formerly),
Singapore Bible College*

Many books have shown that the basis for mission can and should be derived from the Bible. While Christopher Wright, the Director of the Langham Partnership International, would agree with this, he would argue that it is not enough. *The Mission of God* articulates his view that the Bible not only provides fuel for lighting and maintaining a vision for mission, but that God's mission can and should be used as a hermeneutical 'key that unlocks the whole grand narrative of the canon of Scripture.' His concern is not so much with 'The Biblical Basis of Mission' as with 'The Missional Basis of the Bible', since the whole text was written to witness to the mission of God. (Even though Wright defines the term, the frequent use of the adjective 'missional' could lead to some misunderstanding as its meaning has become very fluid in recent popular discussions.)

This missional reading of Scripture traces the contours of biblical theology by developing the major biblical themes that highlight God's mission as revealed from Genesis through Revelation. Indeed, the book reads largely as an Old Testament theology of mission, showing how the themes first encountered there are developed in the New Testament.

The book is divided into four parts and fifteen chapters. Part One, 'The Bible and

Mission', develops Wright's missional hermeneutic. Chapter One urges us to move beyond searching for a biblical foundation for mission, beyond identifying a multicultural hermeneutic, beyond contextualizing theology, and beyond post-modern hermeneutics. It is not that these approaches lack benefits, but that they do not go far enough. Thus the second chapter suggests that the whole Bible be seen as the product of God's mission. In summary, '[T]he whole Bible renders to us the story of God's mission through God's people in their engagement with God's world for the sake of the whole of God's creation.' While Wright has certainly directed the discussion in a positive direction, his hermeneutic needs further development to be convincing, as it is far from clear that the text requires this missional hermeneutic. As is evidenced by the different emphases of the various approaches to biblical theology, what works well when investigating certain texts or themes may not prove as useful when applied to other texts.

In three chapters, Part Two, 'The God of Mission', considers how God makes himself known in Israel and in Jesus Christ, and how he confronts idolatry. The exodus is rightly identified as the great redemptive event in Israel's history. But as Wright shows, God's choice of Israel was not intended to benefit them alone but was a means of showing his care for everyone. The chapter on Jesus shows that the New Testament identifies him with Yahweh, describes him as performing the functions of Yahweh, and witnesses that he fulfills Yahweh's mission. While this is an excellent discussion of Jesus' person and mission, one wonders why more space was not given to the centrality of the cross in God's mission. The chapter on idolatry rightly indicates that biblical affirmations about God should guide any discussion of other gods. The

discussion is nuanced in its recognition that the Bible is far from monolithic in the way it sometimes describes the gods as created objects, as demons, or as the work of human hands.

Part Three, 'The People of Mission', focuses on the people God uses to model his righteousness and bring his redemption to the world. Thus the blessings promised to Abraham were intended to touch the world, not just Israel. God's desire to redeem and restore people who have been affected by sin, leads Wright to present the exodus and the Jubilee as models of redemption and restoration that influence what the rest of the Bible teaches about these themes. God's mission is said to be accomplished through a series of covenants through which he extends his concern for humankind and the rest of creation. The section is completed with a discussion on the ethics that God's people should express if they are to take part in his task of mission.

Part Four unites four topics under the theme 'The Arena of Missions'. Though rarely discussed in this context, Wright identifies the physical earth as an integral part of God's mission that should not be shunted as secondary to the proclamation of the gospel. Rather, he demonstrates that caring for creation gives us an opportunity to express our love and obedience to God, to exercise our priestly and kingly role in the earth, and to provide a prophetic witness to the world as we live out biblical teaching on compassion and justice for all creation. This is followed by a discussion of what it means for humans to be made in God's image, the effects of sin upon God's image, and the way in which this should influence our involvement in mission. The final two chapters overview God's desire for the nations to become his people as witnessed by a number of important pas-

sages from the Old and New Testaments. Wright has produced an important book that deserves to be widely read by missionaries, biblical scholars, pastors and other Christians who desire to understand God's mission and their place in it. By developing Old Testament themes about God and his people, he puts to rest common notions that mission is a New Testament phenomenon. While the emphasis on Old Testament material provides material that is not available elsewhere, it may limit the use of the book in missions classrooms unless it is supplemented by readings on missiological themes that are primarily developed in the New Testament. The same emphasis however means that the book could be a welcomed addition to a class on biblical theology, as it successfully models how key Old Testament themes can be traced into the New Testament.

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Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?

James K. A. Smith

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic,
2006

ISBN: 978-0-8010-2918-9

Pb, pp 156, bibliog., index

*Reviewed by Rob Haskell, Senderis,
Washington, USA.*

Although the ideas of Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault—the 'unholy trinity' that founded postmodernism—are often seen as radically antichristian, James K. A. Smith argues that a serious look at what they said is actually very helpful for those who are seeking to be faithful followers of Christ today.

Smith tells us that in order to understand the ideas through which postmodernism 'slouched out of Paris' it is necessary to

overcome the bumper sticker summaries that circulate among Christians. In Derrida's case, the bumper sticker summary is that 'there is nothing outside the text,' where this is taken to mean that nothing controls the meaning of a text. Everything is interpretation. But Smith argues that although Derrida did teach that everything is interpretation, he did not deny that there are real things out there in the world that we bump into, nor did he think that all interpretations were equally valid. Derrida's core insight was that we cannot appeal to anything that is uninterpreted. Smith welcomes this insight and sees Derrida in light of the Reformed notion of epistemological bias. He further suggests that if everything is interpretation, this should lead us back to scripture as our guide to interpreting the 'text' of the world.

Lyotard is famous for defining postmodernity as 'incredulity towards meta-narratives,' as a kind of opening salvo against modernity. This bumper sticker phrase is usually taken to mean that postmodernity is against overarching stories that explain our world. Understood in this way, the statement is essentially a denial of the legitimacy of worldviews would be inimical to Christian faith. If the Bible is anything, it is an overarching story about the past, present and future of creation. If big stories are out, so is Christianity.

But Smith points out that for Lyotard a meta-narrative is a uniquely modern phenomenon. It is not the overarching story in itself that is under criticism by postmodernism, but the rationally justified story. The modern fallacy is to think that a worldview can be legitimized by appeal to reason. It follows then, that the Christian meta-narrative is not the Biblical panorama itself, but rationalist apologetics in its claim to legitimate the Christian story by an appeal to reason.

Smith thinks we would be right to reject the rationalist apologetic and commends a presuppositionalist approach in which rather than attempting to prove Christianity through a misguided appeal to reason we instead proclaim the Christian story in the power of the Spirit. Finally, Smith arrives at Foucault's study of modern institutions and the way in which they embody the principles at work in the society at large. Foucault argues, for example, that for the last 300 years prison systems have been instances of society and ought not to be compartmentalized as if they operated on a different level. The principle at work in all modern institutions and thus in all society is the principle that *power is knowledge*. This does not mean that the two are identical, but that they are integrally related.

Smith highlights the controversy over what Foucault intended to accomplish by his analysis. Did he describe power-knowledge relations in order to encourage a Nietzschean will to power? Or was he critiquing the dehumanizing aspects of power/knowledge in modern institutions in order to bring about change? Smith argues that the latter is the case and that it points to an inherent modernism in Foucault: his critique of modern institutions is to be placed in the same category as modern liberalism's obsession with the freedom of the individual. And yet, argues Smith, there is still much we can learn from Foucault, for he has highlighted the importance of power as a formative and disciplinary force and he can help us understand the need for spiritual discipline in the formation of Christian character and community.

A final chapter works out what a church that listens to these postmodern insights might look like. Here Smith makes the valuable distinction between being post-modern and being 'relevant'. The two are

often confused in outreach parlance, but a postmodern approach rejects the pragmatism implied in attempts to focus church life around 'relevance'. Rather, it pulls towards localization, attention to church tradition and a liturgical outlook on life.

Smith is a philosopher who works hard at staying accessible, effectively mining such films as *Memento*, *The Little Mermaid* and *Whale Rider* to expound ideas. But at times his applications are problematic, or perhaps just underdeveloped. One is left disconcerted at the claim that there can be no rational legitimization of Christianity. I suspect that Smith is not meaning there are no good reasons to believe the Christian story, but merely that there are no ontologically infallible proofs for Christianity. But he does not work this out very well and I wish he had because the uninitiated reader could come away with the message that there is no reason to prefer one religion or worldview over another, except perhaps by who tells the better story. This is an important question: Can we determine whether one worldview is better than another in the absence of rational legitimization?

His application of Foucault is also problematic. Foucault turns out to be a modernist anyway, so Smith applies his insight backwards: although Foucault was critical of the use of power for social discipline, we Christians can recognize that discipline is good thing for spiritual formation. But this begs for a discussion of the nature of power in and outside the church. Surely, there is much about the power that Foucault describes which the church ought to reject; so much so that one wonders if we ought to accept the insight at all. Also, is it really appropriate to dismiss appeals to the rights of individuals as mere radical modernist individualism? We run the danger of confusing individualism with basic human compassion.

Many Evangelicals see postmodernism as just another wave of relativism without fully understanding the issues that are at stake. Smith had done a tremendous job of getting the ideas of postmodernism on the table for a wide audience to interact with. Even if one might disagree with some of Smith's applications, his expositions of Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault are very helpful for understanding the relationship between postmodern thought and Christianity.

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The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace

Kenneth J. Collins,
Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Abingdon
Press, 2007
ISBN: 978-0-687-64633-3
Pb, pp 423, bibliog, index.

Reviewed by Philip A. Gottschalk, Tyndale
Theological Seminary, Badhoevedorp, The
Netherlands

Dr. Collins' book *The Theology of John Wesley* is a masterful and exhaustive study of Wesley's thought. As Collins himself admits, Wesley's theology was mainly practical theology, i.e. theology done with a view towards ministering to particular situations and individuals. Thus there is no 'theology' of John Wesley which he himself left. However, Collins has succeeded in drawing together from Wesley's pastoral letters, sermons, essays and treatises a comprehensive, full-orbed systematic theology. As well he has succeeded in presenting Wesley's systematic theology with much more subtlety than his predecessors.

Collins suggests that rather than simply identifying Wesley as an 'Arminian' and

calling his system 'synergistic', Wesley was a blend of Protestant and Catholic emphases. In Collins' view, Wesley was as Protestant as Calvin with regards to the need for God to make the first step resulting in justification. Yet the Catholic influence (Wesley's reading of the Eastern and Western Fathers) resulted in his view that 'entire sanctification' of which justification was a part, was a process. Justification was 'instantaneous' while sanctification was a 'process'.

In Collins' estimation most Wesley scholars (as well as detractors) have missed Wesley's subtlety. In order to correct this problem he presents two 'axial themes' by which he endeavors to present Wesley's thought. Both of these axial themes allow for a more precise understanding of what Wesley actually intended to say, rather than what others have interpolated.

Collins gives diagrams to help readers understand the 'conjunctive' nature of Wesley's thought. He also uses similar diagrams in subsequent chapters which help clarify ideas in them.

| The Axial Theme of Wesley's Practical Theology | |
|---|----------------|
| Holiness | Grace |
| Holy/Love | Free/Cooperant |

The first half of the axial theme is Holiness as Holy Love by which Collins explains how Wesley saw holiness as a combination of God's holiness and love, as well as the responding sinner's need for holiness and love. God's holiness requires obedience to the law, but through his love he provides a satisfaction for the penalty of transgressing that law.

From the recipient's standpoint, holiness is what God desires of her but which, without love for God, she cannot obtain. Thus, God gives that love to the respondent which results in a desire for holiness.

| The Conjunction of Grace | |
|--------------------------|---|
| The Work of God alone | Co-operant Grace (Responsible) Synergism |
| Highlights Favor | Highlights Empowerment |
| Receiving | Responding |
| Instantaneous | Process |
| Protestant Emphasis | Catholic Emphasis |

The second half of the axial theme, the Conjunction of Grace, has a much more complicated structure, but shows more intricately how Wesley included various influences from his own spiritual growth: his Anglican heritage, that of Reformation figures, Moravian, German Pietists, and his reading of the Eastern and Western Fathers.

As an illustration of how this conjunction works we will focus only on the issue of 'entire sanctification'. From the standpoint of justification a sinner cannot obtain salvation without God's work. Justification is the work of God alone. However, Wesley saw justification as a part of a larger process. God does the work of justifying; the 'new birth' is 'instantaneous'. On the other hand, as with sanctification more 'broadly understood', the new birth is a 'process' which requires the respondent's active involvement.

Through these axial themes then Collins attempts to overcome past oversimplifications of Wesley's thought. After having set up his interpretative framework, Collins then goes on to present a complete systematic theology of John Wesley. He begins with God the Father and proceeds through every area of theology ending with eschatology. In each chapter he first attempts to present Wesley's own views from his own works, then he responds to other interpreters of Wesley attempting to answer their views and explain why his view is preferable; finally he attempts to apply Wesley's thought to questions of the 21st century. While the third section of each chapter is interesting, in some instances his attempts to apply Wesley's ideas to the 21st century seem a bit forced.

There are only two other potential difficulties for the reader. First, his axial themes and explanations are quite complicated and take some careful reading to understand. Still they do allow Collins room to make his case for Wesley's subtle theology. Secondly, for those from outside the Wesleyan tradition there may be just a bit too much internecine jousting.

Still, it is book well worth reading. Collins' task is a huge one, but he greatly succeeds in it. His book is a fresh look at systematic theology in general, not only for Wesley scholars or Methodists. It represents another approach to most other current Evangelical theologies which are generally more reformed in nature.

ERT (2009) 33:2, 194-199

Contextual Theology for Latin America: Liberation Themes in Evangelical Perspective

Sharon E. Heaney

Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008
 Paternoster Theological Monographs
 ISBN 13: 978-1-60608-016-0
 Pb, pp 330

Reviewed by J. Daniel Salinas, Paraguay

Misconceptions about Latin American evangelical theology are many. But after Heaney's work there is no excuse to plead ignorance. This book fills a huge void in the scholarship and will become a compulsory text for everyone with interest in learning about a mostly unknown side of evangelicalism. Her portrayal of evangelical theology from Latin America as 'vibrant, biblical, coherent, wholeheartedly evangelical, and sensitively contextual' (250) leaves the reader with a longing to learn more about the subject matter. Heaney weaves history, cultural analysis, and theological prowess to present an impressive picture of what has happened south of the Rio Grande in the Christian community both Roman Catholic and evangelical.

In a creative way, Heaney compares the parallel developments of liberation theologies and evangelical theology showing the common context but at the same time the important differences between the two. In my own research, I found that those whom Heaney calls evangelical are considered liberationists in many religious circles in the North Atlantic countries. I hope her clear and painstaking explanation removes once and for all those unfounded opinions.

In spite of Heaney's well-done research I found a few lacunae both in content and

sources. Among the former, she overlooks the fact that Roman Catholicism in Latin America is not only a religion but a culture. Even non-religious Latin Americans would identify themselves as 'Catholics'. Roman Catholicism has provided many elements that shaped the general Latin American ethos and worldview. Therefore, when talking about Roman Catholicism it should be clearly explained if the reference is to the religious or the cultural. This distinction is quite hard to understand for those who, like Heaney, view Latin America from a distance. Such differentiation would have helped her explain some elements of Liberation Theologies which evangelicals criticize more strongly.

Another fact she overlooked is the powerful influence of dispensationalism on the majority of evangelicals in Latin America. Many of the theological emphases and themes the people Heaney includes in her book were directly or indirectly aimed at the teachings of dispensationalism. For example, until the 1970s, hermeneutics was monochromatic closely following the dispensational school. The theologians presented in the book were the first ones who broke that spell and defined other hermeneutical horizons, an accomplishment of vast proportions. Had Heaney contrasted the evangelical theology she introduced with dispensationalism, she would have had many more reasons to show its relevance.

Heaney, who studied at Queens University Belfast and teaches Religious Studies at an Oxfordshire school, would have benefited from Diememme E. Noelliste's dissertation 'The Church and Human Emancipation: A Critical Comparison of Liberation Theology and the Latin American Theological Fraternity' (Northwestern University, 1987). Noelliste covers much of the same

ground although with a different methodology. Another classical dissertation on the subject is Pius Franz Helfenstein, 'Evangelikale Theologie der Befreiung. Das Reich Gottes in der Theologie der 'Fraternidad Teologica Latinoamericana' und der Gägigen Befreiungstheologie, ein Vergleich' (Basel University, 1991). However, in spite of these minor details this book is definitely a must in any library.

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Living the Dream: Joseph for Today: A Dramatic Exposition of Genesis 37-50

Pete Wilcox

Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007
 ISBN 978-1-84227-555-9
 Pb pp131

Reviewed by Susannah Clark, Evangelical Alliance UK.

Pete Wilcox, Canon Chancellor at Lichfield Cathedral, retells the Joseph story as a series of 14 'episodes' or chapters broken down into multiple 'scenes'. His purpose is to re-connect the audience with the dramatic significance of this well known narrative.

Each 'scene' commences with the relevant Biblical text, before providing expository comment which seeks to engage the reader with the story. The content of the commentary varies considerably depending on the passage in question but in general the author explores the relationships between the characters, their actions and emotions and seeks to place the events within the wider context of Genesis and the rest of the Biblical narrative.

The strength of the book, and what marks it out as unique, is that far from

just being a commentary on Joseph, the author seeks to relate each scene to contemporary church life. Themes addressed include adversity, disunity, reconciliation and forgiveness. Wilcox shows clearly how God is at work even in times when he may seem distant. The author focuses on the relationship between divine and human workings; he notes that reconciliation and forgiveness are often a long process and how God works despite our imperfections. The need for faithfulness, patience and perseverance and the importance of standing firm against temptations and living with integrity are all emphasized.

The book is primarily aimed at the popular market as it contains little detailed or academic study. In his introduction, Wilcox notes his use of the work of John Calvin, Claus Westermann, R.S. Wallace, R.T. Kendall, Robert Alter and Walter Bruggemann. However there are no further specific references to these works in the rest of the text.

Throughout the book some attempt is made to place the story of Joseph in the

wider context of the Old Testament and indeed the New with references in particular to the story of the Prodigal Son and an indication that we can understand Joseph as a type of Christ. However, there was room for more references to be made to the wider biblical text and there were times when it would have been helpful if the points made had been expanded to allow the reader a deeper engagement with the text and its context.

Living the Dream lends itself very well to being used as a Bible study either for groups or individuals, given that each chapter of the Joseph story is helpfully broken down into manageable 'episodes'. A single chapter of the book could easily be covered in a session. I would not necessarily recommend reading the whole book in one sitting; rather it is well laid out for several reflective studies over a few days or weeks. The great strength of the book is that it is very readable and does not require much, if any, prior knowledge. As an introductory text to encourage engagement with the story of Joseph this is an excellent place to start and I would highly recommend it.

Transcribed by Marylynn Rouse: *Ministry on my mind: John Newton on entering pastoral ministry* (Stratford-upon-Avon, The John Newton Project: 2008) ISBN 978-0-9559635-0-6 Pb pp30.

The John Newton Project is to be congratulated on producing this short booklet which is the private reflections of the notorious slave-trader, John Newton, as he considered a call to the ministry. Converted about ten years earlier, he was approaching his 33rd birthday in 1758, and devoted himself in the weeks leading up to this event to give concentrated prayer, study and self-examination to the challenge. To help with the process he wrote out his thoughts, particularly the results of his study of key biblical passages (including Mark 9:24, 2 Cor. 2:26; Luke 14:28; Heb. 5:4 and 1 Tim 4:16), and the thoughts he had about his faith and commitment, and the nature of the ministry, its requirements and qualifications, and above all the grace he needed to respond to the call he felt so strongly. Finally, on his birthday, 4 August, he came to a positive conclusion and made a series of resolutions to give himself by God's power to this work which would occupy him until his death almost 50 years later.

It is a little disconcerting to read such a document—one that was never intended for the

public (it is attractively presented in this publication, and even includes some facsimile excerpts of his own handwriting). But its intense spirituality, profound biblical reflection and honesty make it an document that is certain to be extraordinarily beneficial to all who read it 250 years later.

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

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The New Conspirators Creating the Future One Mustard Seed at a Time

Tom Sine

God is doing something fresh through a new generation of 'conspirators'. This new work can be seen in at least four different streams: the emerging, the missional, the mosaic (multicultural church plants) and the monastic. In this book Tom Sine presents some of the innovative new models that are being created by those ministering within these diverse streams. He also explores the important questions they are raising for all of us regarding what it means to be a disciple, be the church and do the mission of the church. The book then investigates new challenges facing both our larger global society and the church as we journey together into an increasingly uncertain future. It is a call for all of us to join these new conspirators in discovering creative ways in which God might use our mustard seeds to be a part of what he is doing to manifest his kingdom in the world.

'Through the years, Tom Sine's writing has repeatedly knocked me out of my comfort zone. He continually inspires me with hope and encouragement. His new book is rich with challenge and inspiration, and it's full of signs that good things are afoot in the church and for the good of the world.'

Brian D. McLaren, author/activist (brianmclaren.net)

'In this innovative and compelling contribution, Tom Sine looks at how the Church can make the divine dream – the Wild Hope of the gospel – a reality.'

Russell Rook, Director of ALOVE, the Salvation Army for a New Generation

Tom Sine is an author and a Christian speaker with an international ministry. He is founder of Mustard Seed Associates, Seattle, USA.

978-1-84227-559-7 / 216 x 140mm / 233pp (est.) / £8.99

The Day is Yours Slow Spirituality for People on the Go

Ian Stackhouse

The Day is Yours is a protest against the culture of speed both in society at large, but also, more ominously, in the church itself. Rooted in the monastic liturgy of the hours, *The Day is Yours* argues that in order for Christians to act as a truly prophetic witness, in a time of cultural decadence, they must recover a more biblical rhythm in which work, rest, relationships, worship and prayer are held together in creative tension. Written by a pastor, the central thrust of *The Day is Yours* is that living one day at a time with gratitude and contentedness is vital, lest the church capitulates to the distractedness of modern life.

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Uv Thomas, Director of Formation, www.formation.org.uk

Ian Stackhouse is the Pastoral Leader of the Millmead Centre, home of Guildford Baptist Church, UK. He is author of *The Gospel-Driven Church*.

978-1-84227-600-6 / 216 x 140mm / 160pp / £9.99

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