

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Theological Students Fellowship (TSF) Bulletin (US)* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_tsfbulletin-us.php



BULLETIN

THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS FELLOWSHIP

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1983

Vol. 6, No. 3

\$2.00

EDITOR

Mark Lau Branson TSF General Secretary

ADVISORY EDITORS

Clark H. Pinnock, *Systematic Theology*
McMaster Divinity College

Paul A. Mickey, *Practical Theology*
Duke Divinity School

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Stephen T. Davis, *Philosophy*
Claremont McKenna College

Donald Dayton, *News Analysis*
Northern Baptist Theological Seminary

Robert L. Hubbard, *Old Testament*
Denver Seminary

Stephen C. Mott, *Ethics*
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Grant R. Osborne, *New Testament*
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Donald Tinder, *Church History*
New College, Berkeley

David Lowes Watson, *Evangelism*
Perkins School of Theology

PERSPECTIVES EDITORS

Elward D. Ellis Madison, WI

Luis Cortes Philadelphia, PA

Nancy A. Hardesty Atlanta, GA

Thomas F. Stransky Oak Ridge, NJ

FACULTY CONTRIBUTORS

Bernard Adeney Pacific School of Religion

Donald Bloesch University of Dubuque
Theological Seminary

Geoffrey W. Bromiley Fuller Theological
Seminary

Harvie M. Conn Westminster Theological
Seminary

Charles Ellenbaum College of DuPage

Vernard Eller University of LaVerne

David Gill New College, Berkeley

Larry Hurtado University of Manitoba

Susanne Johnson Perkins School
of Theology

Richard Mouw Calvin College

Thomas Oden Drew University
Theological School

Pheme Perkins Boston College

Bernard Ramm American Baptist
Seminary of the West

Gerald Sheppard Union Theological
Seminary

Charles R. Taber Emmanuel School
of Religion

Keith Yandell University of Wisconsin

Gregory A. Youngchild New Haven, CT

FOUNDATIONS

Evangelicals and the Enlightenment: Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism

Bernard Ramm 2

Tradition and Theology: A Roman Catholic Response to Clark Pinnock

Avery Dulles, S.J. 6

MINISTRY

Toward a Social Evangelism (Part I)

David Lowes Watson 8

INQUIRY

Beyond the Nation-State:

Defining a Transnational Vision for the Contemporary Church

Dean C. Curry 11

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Mentoring

Spiritual Formation in the Seminary Community

Dick Daniels 13

Meditations for Couples

Applying the Teachings of Christ to Build Stronger Marriages

Edward "Chip" Anderson 15

ACADEME

Student Initiative: Models for Action

Mark Lau Branson 17

INTERSECTION

Meetings, Meetings, Meetings

19

REVIEWS

Book Reviews (Itemized on back cover)

21

make use of multiple criteria, including the witness of Scripture, the teaching of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, the judgment of theologians, the common preaching and teaching of the pastors of the Church (notably popes and bishops), the official teaching of creeds and magisterial documents, the general sense of the faithful, the arguments offered, and the anticipated practical effects of embracing or rejecting the doctrine in question. Only rarely will any one of these criteria be so clear and decisive that consultation of the others becomes superfluous. Normally truth is reached through a kind of logic of convergence.

As compared with Protestants, Roman Catholics, as Pinnock notes, tend to place greater weight on the teaching office of the Church. In his presentation of the Catholic position Pinnock can perhaps be criticized for identifying tradition too closely with the magisterium, though some Catholics, it must be admitted, have done likewise, especially in the early part of the twentieth century. Vatican II, like other councils, clearly distinguished the two. It taught that "the teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on."⁷ The magisterium, therefore, is subordinate to both Scripture and tradition. Although it can interpret the word of God with authority, it is not free to depart from the word of God.

Pinnock notes with apparent approval that some evangelicals are "urging us to grasp the threefold cord of Scripture, rule of faith, and church authority." Catholic readers will applaud this suggestion and will be pleased by Pinnock's emphasis on "the usefulness of a teaching

office." He clearly recognizes the value of the magisterium for clarifying the meaning of the Bible and for preserving the Church from strange teachings. He even notes the desirability of a universal magisterium. In his own words, "What is needed is a voice which can gather together the insights of the fully ecumenical experience of the people of God and exercise an office clearly subservient to the Scriptures, relying upon a teaching charism in the churches which listens to the text in a responsible way." This sentence comes close to describing what Lutherans and Catholics, in their American dialogue, agreed upon as the desiderata for the "Petrine office."

In bringing this brief response to a conclusion, I am gratified by the extent to which I find myself in agreement. Professor Pinnock's article encourages me to believe that conservative evangelicals and Roman Catholics are at length becoming engaged in a fruitful dialogue. With so many common concerns, the two groups cannot afford to ignore each other.

FOOTNOTES

1. M. Blondel, *History and Dogma* (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), p. 266.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 268.
3. M. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (Harper Torchbooks, 1964), p. 53.
4. Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)*, no. 8.
5. *Ibid.*, no. 9.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, no. 10.

MINISTRY

(The application of theology, ethics, and prayer to the life of the church)

Toward a Social Evangelism

Part I

by David Lowes Watson

The Christian faith is first and foremost a message for the world, and evangelism as the communication of that message is rightly perceived by the church as a priority. This does not, however, make evangelism a singular activity. The ministry of the church has many forms of outreach, and the focus of evangelism on the essentials of the gospel renders it no less accountable to other disciplines of the church than it in turn is the measure of their accountability to the Christian witness. Mutual accountability, of course, is much more than the exchange of inter-disciplinary formalities. It is nothing less than genuine dialogue, undertaken openly and at risk. What follows in this paper, therefore, is an attempt to expose evangelism not only to the relevance, but to the impact of social ethics.

Defining Evangelism

It is important at the outset to establish a working definition of evangelism, and to attempt this in the North American context is at once to be aware of the need for a clear phenomenology. This is the premise of the forceful and well-documented monograph by Mortimer Arias, "In Search of a New Evangelism," in which some prevailing stereotypes are exposed and rightly censured; that of psychological salvation, for example, as little more than an inner transaction to achieve peace of mind; that of the "churchification" of

the world as "at least disputable from a biblical point of view"; or that of radical social change as the mere baptism of revolution with the Christian cause. These and other alternatives, suggests Arias, pose a false dilemma between the "saving of souls" and the "Christianizing of the social order," whereas true evangelism must address people in the totality of their being: individual and social, physical and spiritual, historical and eternal.¹

A helpful contribution has been made recently by David Bosch in discussing the relationship between evangelism and mission.² He takes issue with John R. W. Stott, who has argued that mission is the comprehensive work of the church, including evangelism and social responsibility.³ As part of the church's mission, according to Stott, evangelism is the announcement of the gospel, regardless of the results, and Bosch agrees to the extent that evangelism must be defined in terms of its content rather than its objects. He disagrees, however, in that he regards the church's credibility as also of the utmost importance.⁴ Verbal proclamation cannot be all there is to evangelism, and to distinguish it from social action is potentially restrictive, since evangelism and mission are the frontier of the church's presence in the world. Mission is "the task of the Church in movement, the Church that lives for others," and evangelism is its fundamental dimension.⁵

Phenomenologically, however, this is less than clear for the purposes of evangelism in the North American context. To regard it as a dimension, albeit the fundamental dimension, of the frontier of the church's presence in the world is to imply that there are other dimensions of ministry which are in some way the hinterland, and this is not consistent with the corporal nature of the church. Proclamation (*kerygma*) and witness (*marturia*) are neither more nor less significant

David Lowes Watson is Assistant Professor of Evangelism at Perkins School of Theology. This article was originally presented as a paper at the Conference on Evangelism and Social Ethics held at Perkins in April, 1981. It is reprinted from the Perkins Journal by permission.

than service (*diakonia* and *leitourgia*), teaching (*didache*), fellowship (*koinonia*) and the building up of the members (*oikodomé*).⁶ It is not clear that evangelism is a component, or segment, or yet a dimension of mission. It is rather that evangelism, along with everything else that comprises the presence of the missional church in the world, is a feature of the ministry of the body of which Christ is the head.⁷ The principle is that of distinctness, but also inseparability; and on the premise that evangelism is unitive with other features of holistic ministry, we shall define it as essentially *the verbal communication of the gospel*.

A church which announces a gospel of reconciliation with God cannot of course present it without the credibility of a loving presence in the world. The service of worship and sacrament, with nurture and instruction for those who are gathered into the church, must also be incarnate in social service to the world. Unitive ministry, however, in which all of these features are interdependent and complementary, obviates the need to ascribe to evangelism more than the word itself means. By this definition, the focus of evangelism becomes quite specifically the discerning and defining of the Christian message in the immediate worldly context of the church as it traditions the faith; and then its intentional communication, regardless of the results. This is not to say that the response to the message is irrelevant, but it is to argue that holistic ministry, rather than evangelistic ministry *per se*, will ensure that the church is credible, receptive and serving. The point is more than mere semantics. Phenomenologically it ensures that the evangelistic message will not be determined by responses, anticipated or actualized. The criterion for that to which we testify is thereby established as nothing more nor less than the gospel, faithfully traditioned.

This definition comes close to that of Stott, but differs in that it does not regard evangelism as a component of mission. It assumes that the mission of the church is not so much the frontier of its presence in the world as a criterion—indeed, the fundamental criterion—for that presence, actualized in holistic ministry.

If it is accepted that evangelism is the verbal presentation of the gospel, by proclamation and testimony, and that its function is to determine the essentials of that which is to be communicated, we can turn once again to Mortimer Arias for direction:

The gospel of the Kingdom begins with the forgiveness of sins. . . . before our engagement, before our action, before our concrete love, and beyond our achievements or failures in human liberation, there is the prevenient, undergirding, and fulfilling love of God, the acceptance of grace, justification by faith.⁸

If there has been an agenda for evangelism in the United States, it has been this doctrine, more or less proclaimed, more or less understood. It has most certainly been the heritage if not the tradition of such activity in our culture, as readily emerges from a study of religious revival. While the outreach of the church has not invariably been that of personal salvation, it must nonetheless be acknowledged that when renewal has led to a concern to communicate the gospel, the doctrinal emphasis has been the critical challenge of justification by faith.⁹

Wesleyan Evangelism

Rather than attempt an overview of such a sweeping prospect of cultural and religious history, it will better serve our purpose to select a paradigm. The choice could well be Jonathan Edwards or Charles Grandison Finney, but we shall take John Wesley as exemplar of evangelical revival. After all, it was H. Richard Niebuhr who described him as the most influential Methodist in America.¹⁰ Wesley's reluctance to "become more vile" and to preach the gospel in the open air is well known, as is the fact that he was roundly criticized for so doing.¹¹ Yet he became singularly devoted to the task of reaching those multitudes who, "week after week spent the Lord's day either in the alehouse or in idle diversions, and never troubled themselves about going to church or to any public worship at all!"¹² Such outcasts of society would never hear the Word of God ordinarily, so God "was moved to jealousy, and went *out of the usual way* to save the souls which he had made. Then over and above what was ordinarily spoken in his name in all the houses of God in the land, he

commanded a voice to cry in the wilderness: 'Prepare ye and believe the gospel.'¹³

The method of preaching which Wesley recommended was quite specific. First came the law, in the "strongest, the closest, the most searching manner possible; only intermixing the gospel here and there, and showing it, as it were, afar off."¹⁴ In this way the unbeliever was convicted of sin, and the believer sustained in spiritual life and strength. Then the gospel should be proclaimed, the more explicitly the better, declaring that the first and greatest commandment for the Christian is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, "that Christ is all in all, our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."¹⁵ The evangelistic dynamic of this is most important, for it indicates that the presentation of the gospel in the first instance, the cutting edge of its verbal communication, is to affirm the reality and culpability of human sin.¹⁶

The forgiveness offered by God is not only for past misdeeds, nor yet for a failure to trust in God's future. It is also a critical conviction on the part of the sinner who becomes acutely aware of a present condition, but who has no power to deal with it. It is only when heavenly, healing light breaks in upon the soul that the sinner has "a divine 'evidence of things not seen' by sense, even of 'the deep things of God'; more particularly of the love of God, of his pardoning love to him that believes in Jesus. . . . Here end both the guilt and power of sin. . . . Here end remorse, and sorrow of heart, and the anguish of a wounded spirit."¹⁷

Ethical Implications of Wesley's Evangelism

The question which immediately arises when evangelism is considered as a feature of holistic ministry, however, is the extent to which the doctrine of justification by faith can be distinguished from its ethical implications. In this regard Wesley is perhaps the most significant evangelist in our tradition, and it is important not to read him merely in the context of his early years of field ministry.¹⁸ In a

True evangelism must address people in the totality of their being: individual and social, physical and spiritual, historical and eternal.

pivotal article for contemporary Wesley studies, Albert Outler has shown how Wesley wrestled with this doctrine for many years.¹⁹ It was clearly of concern to him shortly after Aldersgate Street, and he affirmed it in his early polemical treatises as an immediate sense of pardon, available to the believer by faith.²⁰ His definitive statement, however, was in 1765, when he took the position that the righteousness of Christ is the meritorious cause of justifying faith. In his sermon, "The Lord Our Righteousness," he made clear that he viewed the imputed righteousness of Christ's atoning work as the cause of our justification, and faith in that righteousness as its only condition.²¹

This was not, it is important to note, an imparted righteousness. Wesley distinguished between the immediacy of the new covenant relationship in Christ and the ethical requirements which accompanied it, even though he regarded them as wholly interdependent. The *General Rules of the United Societies* had established this in 1743 at a very practical level. There was no requirement for becoming a member of a Methodist society other than a desire to "flee from the wrath to come."²² But the corollary to this was unequivocal: that those who truly so desired would manifest their desire in their public behavior. They would avoid evil, they would do good, and they would avail themselves of the ordinances of the church.²³ The point of Wesley's distinction is that his rules did not diminish the critical impact of justification. This remained the thrust of the evangelistic presentation of the gospel—a call to accept the utter reality of sin, the point at which the sense of God's pardon through the merits of Christ might be received by faith—and it was the mainspring of Wesley's oral preaching.²⁴

Yet the very power of this challenge can readily become its flaw if it

is merely the occasion of changed sensitivities. In its fullness, the doctrine of justification by faith is the source of ethical behavior, in which the development of virtue springs from the new relationship with God in Christ, and becomes established in the practice of obedience to God's normative rules of obligation. It is not that Wesley identified justification by faith with ethical obligation, the issue at the heart of his dispute with Calvinists in the years following the 1770 Conference

The doctrine of justification by faith is the source of ethical behavior.

Minutes, and in the heat of which he found himself identified as a Pelagian.²⁵ In point of fact his position was very far from this. Good works, he consistently argued, could not earn salvation, but by prevenient grace they could lead to the repentance which was the condition of justifying faith.²⁶ They were then necessary, as works of obedience, in order to *maintain* the faith through which, in the power of a moment-by-moment sense of pardon, the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit would work a real as well as relative change in the believer.²⁷

From this it can be readily discerned that, for Wesley, sanctification did not dispense with the ongoing need for justifying grace. His sermon, "The Repentance of Believers," published in 1767, refers to the repentance and faith which are necessary to continuance and growth in grace. The guilt which belongs to the children of God is to be understood cautiously, and in a peculiar sense, but it nonetheless is a continuing feeling of "utter helplessness" in which the believer feels the

"power of Christ every moment, enabling a continuance in the spiritual life," and without which, notwithstanding all our present holiness, we should be devils the next moment."²⁸ It is what Jonathan Edwards described as "evangelical humiliation," the sixth distinguishing sign of truly gracious and holy affections, "a sense that a Christian has of his own utter insufficiency, despicableness, and odiousness, with an answerable frame of heart."²⁹

Yet in Edwards and Wesley both, this sense of grace is not an end in itself. It is the virtue by which moral obligation is fulfilled. This mistake in our evangelical tradition—and it would be individious as well as impossible in this limited space to try to ascribe responsibility—has been to isolate the distinctiveness of justification as pardon from its doctrinal and therefore its ethical context.³⁰ If evangelism and social ethics have been perceived in our time as exclusive or even alternative forms of Christian outreach, it is a symptom of the personalized gospel and individualized ethic which stem from the misapplication of justification as an evangelistic tool rather than a message. Wesley had a word for this in his own day, which comes to us remarkably fresh:

If we *duly join* faith and works in all our preaching, we shall not fail of a blessing. But of all preaching, what is usually called gospel preaching is the most useless, if not the most mischievous: a dull, yea, or lively harangue on the sufferings of Christ or salvation by faith without strongly inculcating holiness. I see more and more that this naturally tends to drive holiness out of the world.³¹

In Part II, which will appear in the March–April TSF Bulletin, Watson will focus on eschatology, relating it to justification as the needed ingredient to fill out our understanding of evangelism.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Perkins Journal* 32 (Winter 1979): 23–28. Bishop Arias's monograph is published bilingually in this issue of the *Journal*, in English and in Spanish.
2. *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*, New Foundations Theological Library (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), pp. 11–20.
3. John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1975), pp. 20–34.
4. Bosch, *Witness*, p. 18. Cf. Stott, *Christian Mission*, pp. 37–40.
5. Bosch, *Witness*, pp. 18, 20.
6. Eph. 4:11, 13, 19. Cf. I Cor. 14:12, 26.
7. Rom. 12, I Cor. 12.
8. Arias, "In Search," p. 26.
9. This emerges quite tellingly from Martin E. Marty's detailed panorama, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America*, Two Centuries of American Life: A Bicentennial Series (New York: The Dial Press, 1970). For the extent to which this is a perennial problem for North American evangelism, see pp. 177–87.
10. *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), p. 146.
11. *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols, Standard Edition, ed. Nehemiah Curnock (London: Robert Culley, 1909), 2:172. See also John Wesley, "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part 1," in *The Oxford Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 34 vols., editor-in-chief Frank Baker, vol. 11: *The Appeals of Men to Reason and Religion and Certain Related Open Letters*, ed. Gerald R. Cragg (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 167ff.
12. John Wesley, "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part III," in *Oxford Edition*, 11:306.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *The Letters of The Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols., ed. John Telford (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 3:79.
15. *Letters*, 3:82.
16. For a helpful discussion of guilt and anxiety in the context of biblical psychology, see Thomas C. Oden, *Guilt Free* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), pp. 80–106.
17. *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, 2 vols., edited and annotated by Edward H. Sugden (London: The Epworth Press, 1921), 1:192–93.
18. Not that these early years are insignificant in this context. In 1739, for example,

- Wesley published *Two Treatises. The First, on Justification by Faith only . . . The Second on the Sinfulness of Man's Natural Will. . . [By Robert Barnes, 1495–1540] . . . Some Account of the Life and Death of Dr. Barnes: Extracted from [John Foxe's] Book of Martyrs*. This is noteworthy because Barnes wrote these treatises in the midst of Anglo-Lutheran disputes on this very issue.
19. "The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition," in *The Place of Wesley in The Christian Tradition*, Essays delivered at Drew University in celebration of the commencement of the publication of the Oxford Edition of the Works of John Wesley, ed. Kenneth E. Rowe (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1976), pp. 11–38.
 20. "Faith, in general, is a divine, supernatural *elenchos* of things not seen, not discoverable by our bodily senses, as being either past, future or spiritual." *Oxford Edition*, 11:106–7. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 66, 444, 454.
 21. *Sermons*, 2:451.
 22. *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols., 3d ed. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979), 8:270.
 23. *Ibid.*, pp. 270–71.
 24. See Albert C. Outler's valuable study, *Evangelism in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Tidings, 1971), pp. 21ff.
 25. *Letters*, 6:175.
 26. "The works of him who has heard the gospel, and does not believe, are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done. And yet we know not how to say, that they are an abomination to the Lord in him who feareth God, and from that principle, does the best he can." See *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, from the First, held in London, by the late Rev. John Wesley, A.M. in the year 1744*, vol. 1 (London Methodist Conference Office, 1812), pp. 22–23.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
 28. *Sermons*, 2:392–93.
 29. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, general editor Perry Miller, vol. 2: *Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 311.
 30. Bernard Haring argues persuasively against this in *Evangelicalism Today* (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, Inc., 1974), pp. 45ff.
 31. *Letters*, 5:345.

BE A SUSTAINING SUBSCRIBER

A growing number of *TSF Bulletin* readers are helping us close the gap between expenses and regular subscription income by becoming Sustaining Subscribers. Sustaining subscribers contribute \$120 per year, either all at once or by monthly or quarterly gifts. In return they receive a year's subscription to *TSF Bulletin*, a selection of several books and monographs, and the satisfaction of playing an important role in *TSF Bulletin's* continued improvement. If you would be interested in becoming a Sustaining Subscriber, or would like more information, please write to us at TSF, 233 Langdon, Madison, WI 53703.

IS ANYTHING HAPPENING ON YOUR CAMPUS?

If there are seminary or religion students on your campus meeting for fellowship, discussion or service, we would like to hear about it. TSF can make available to such groups its resources. Also, by mentioning what is happening on various campuses in the "Academe" section of *TSF Bulletin*, we may be able to suggest ideas and encouragement to students at other schools. Please write Theological Students Fellowship, 233 Langdon, Madison, WI 53703.