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What Is The Capacity Of Evangelicalism To Rise To The Occasion?

The third main question concerns the capacity of the evangelical community to respond. Will evangelicalism rise to the occasion as its record, numbers and the demands of the present moment (not to speak of biblical obedience) would lead one to expect? At a time when American "exceptionalism" is reckoned to have declined, religion in America is the last great exception to the decline of exceptionalism. And evangelicalism in particular appears in many ways to be thriving as almost never before.

Yet a closer examination shows that at just those places where a culture-shaping faith must be strong, evangelicalism at large is alarmingly weak. On the one hand, instead of demonstrating a powerful *claim to truth*, traditionally the source of the Church's strength in its role as the protagonist of its own culture, popular evangelicalism betrays a widespread loss of a Christian mind that is a fatal handicap to cultural transformation in the modern world.

On the other hand, instead of demonstrating a powerful *challenge to tension*, traditionally the source of the Church's strength in its role as the antagonist to other cultures, popular evangelicalism betrays such a lapse into worldliness and cultural captivity that it is fatally handicapped again.

These two comments are sweeping generalizations that require substantiation outside the scope of this article. They are also offset by many magnificent exceptions, especially in the world of evangelical parachurch movements and the world of evangelical colleges and seminaries. But excellent and exceptional though the latter are, their weakness is their intellectual, social and cultural distance from popular evangelicalism.

Whereas fundamentalism has largely retained its strong sense of social and theological cohesion, evangelicalism has developed so great a gap between its "elites" and its "masses" that it appears and acts as socially disjointed.

Short of revival and reformation, severe weaknesses like these are likely to prevent evangelicalism from making a constructive and enduring response to the present moment. Certain concluding questions sharpen the challenge now facing evangelicals.

Who? Whom? Lenin's famous question poses the central challenge to the evangelical community: Are evangelicals as "people of the Gospel" to be shaped radically by the Gospel, or are they as "the earliest and most American" religious community to be shaped more decisively by American culture?

Will Evangelicals Be Evangelical To Others? Evangelicalism, which is conspicuously lacking as a distinct and separate religious tradition, comes into its own as renewing force within the wider church and wider community. Will evangelicals lose their distinctiveness in seeking to protect it, or will they find it in sacrificing themselves to bring life to the wider church and peace and justice to the wider community?

Will God Be God To Evangelicals? If the American republic both requires metaphysical premises yet rejects any official statement of them, making its own enduring vitality a gamble on the dynamism of its "unofficial" faiths, evangelicalism pivots on the same promise and the same problem. One of the least self-derived and self-sustaining of all traditions, evangelicalism without living, personal faith is nothing. G.K. Chesterton's prophetic comment on the American republic can therefore be translated to apply aptly to American evangelicalism: "Freedom is the eagle, whose glory is gazing at the sun."

North American Evangelical Missions: The Last 100 Years

by Marvin Bergman

Approximately 100 missions scholars and practitioners gathered on the campus of Wheaton College June 16-19, 1986, to assess "A Century of World Evangelization: North American Evangelical Missions, 1886-1986." According to the prospectus for the conference, "It is high time that scholars and practitioners of world missions give the missionary experience of the self-consciously evangelical party of American Protestantism the same careful scrutiny now being afforded to the old-line denominational endeavors."

In part, the conference represented an attempt to bring together scholars—especially religious and cultural historians—to promote a better understanding of the evangelical contribution to the American mission enterprise and its interaction with other cultures; this, in turn, can offer insight into the character of American Christianity and the values of American culture generally. But this kind of understanding can be just as valuable for those who are presently committed to the global mission of Christianity as it is for scholars. Again in the words of the prospectus, "the current concern to know intimately the various 'contexts' and 'situations' in which the Christian faith operates and is communicated can be enlightened by

examples from the past. 'Contextualization' of the Christian message can also be enhanced by a nuanced knowledge of the cultural heritage of the missionary."

Usually one expects the keynote addressed at conferences to be the highlights. Occasionally, as in this case, that expectation is rewarded. Andrew Walls, the director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, kicked off the conference in fine style on the first evening with his address, "The American Evangelical Factor in Twentieth Century Missions." He raised in a provocative way many of the issues that resurfaced throughout the conference. But his broad comparative perspective—both geographically and temporally—and his status as an outsider to the American scene helped bring some of those issues into sharper focus. Perhaps his major contribution was to assure evangelicals that as we move into a new era in missions history, we need not fear cultural determination; after all, when God became man, he became culturally determined man. And this relatively brief, remarkably successful, one-hundred-year period of missionary activity is just a small part of the long history of Christian expansion in which brief periods of cross-cultural exchange are always followed by long periods marked by the development of local forms of Christianity.

The other two keynote addresses dealt with shortcomings

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in traditional approaches to studying missions history and suggested new avenues for research. Ralph Winter's banquet address, "The Student Volunteers, Their Heirs, and the Unofficial Missionary Enterprise," used data gathered and analyzed with the aid of computers to assess the continuities and discontinuities and the relative strength of the Student Volunteer Movement, which provided the impetus for the past century of North American evangelical missions, and its successors, especially InterVarsity Fellowship. But his larger aim was to show the dangers of relying on the documents of missions institutions and the rhetoric of their spokespersons.

Arguably the climax of the conference was the address by Lamin Sanneh, assistant professor of the History of Religion in the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University. In his address, entitled "Mission, Translation, and the Future Imperative: Charting a Course," Professor Sanneh insisted that it is now time to move away from both of the traditional ways of studying missions: "secular" scholars have viewed the missionary enterprise as an offspring of colonial imperialism, an epiphenomenon of cultural fashion; missiologists have assessed the success or failure of mission activity by using ideological and statistical measures arising from the missions boards. But, Professor Sanneh insisted, scholars should focus not on missionary motivations but on field performance—not on the basis of the number of converts but on the long-term consequences of their actions. This can best be assessed, he suggested, by paying serious attention to translation work, which ran directly counter to colonial imperialism's efforts to centralize power.

For the remainder of the conference, the organizers divided the "century of world evangelization" into three areas: 1880-1920, 1920-1945, and 1945-present. For each period they apparently intended to establish a dialectic between papers that would focus on the American context for evangelical missions and other papers that would present "case studies" of actual missions in the field.

Dana Robert of Boston University and Grant Wacker of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill established the context for the first era, 1880-1920. Professor Robert's paper, "Premillennial Mission Theory and the Origins of Evangelical Missions," focused on A.T. Pierson and A.J. Gordon, especially their development of the missions slogan, "the evangelization of the world in this generation," as a premillennial theme. In fact, Robert reported, one basis of the division of missions in this period into ecumenical, denominational missions and the more evangelical "faith missions," whose desire was to win souls, or at least to preach the gospel to all, was the premillennial basis of the evangelical missions. In her conclusion, Professor Robert echoed the call made by Joel Carpenter in his introductory remarks that it is time for evangelical historical scholarship to turn its attention from battles over the Bible to other concerns such as missions, which is one of the main reasons for the existence of evangelical institutions today. Grant Wacker's paper, "The Liberal Protestant Search for a Missionary Mandate, 1880-1920," focused on the attitudes of liberal Protestants in America toward non-Western religions. After cautioning that the differences between liberal and evangelical missions are often overdrawn—both assumed Western cultural superiority—he turned his attention to the very real differences between them, especially in their attitudes toward non-Western religions. The assumption of the *ultimate* worthlessness of all non-Christian religions, he argued, led evangelicals to ignore the serious study of the rituals, beliefs, and social and cultural origins of non-Christian religions; such study has largely been left to liberals, who have generally been more interested in the effects of

"general revelation" and in the relationship between religion and its cultural context. Then Professor Wacker went on to trace four stages of development of liberal attitudes toward non-Western religions and to issue a challenge to evangelical scholars to become involved in the serious study of "history of religions."

As if to bear out the claims of Lamin Sanneh and others that the conflicts and theories of Protestants in the North American context had much less impact in the field than one might expect, the three case studies in this era, as in the others, bore little relation to the contextual papers. Leslie Flemming, of the University of Arizona, called attention to the importance of women missionaries as role models in her paper, "New Models, New Roles: American Presbyterian Women Missionaries in North India, 1870-1910." Alan Winqvist of Taylor University employed a biographical approach in his study of "Scandinavian-American Missions in Southern Africa and Zaire." And Lillie Johnson Edwards used insights gleaned from theories of sociologists and cultural anthropologists to illuminate an especially interesting case of cross-cultural interaction: "We've Come This Far by Faith: Afro-American Missionaries in Africa."

The division of North American Protestants and their mission activities became even more pronounced in the next era (1920-1945). James Patterson's (Toccoa Falls College) description of "The Loss of a Protestant Missionary Consensus: Foreign Missions and the Fundamentalist-Modernist Conflict" established the context, while Gary Corwin's (SIM International) paper, "Evangelical Separatism and the Growth of the Independent Mission Boards: Some Preliminary Observations from the Sudan Interior Mission," revealed some of the effects. The case studies, "Missions Under the Mandate: German-American Baptists in Cameroon, 1920-1940," and "Through Many Dangers, Toils, and Snares: China Inland Mission, 1920-1945," were presented by Charles Weber of Wheaton College and Alwyn Austin of Toronto, respectively.

Since 1945 evangelicals have come to play an increasingly dominant role in the missionary enterprise. In the first paper in this section, "Pax Americana and the Evangelical Missionary Advance," Richard Pierard of Indiana State University showed how the effects of World War II contributed to an upsurge of evangelical missions after the war. By relating some personal experiences and some lively quotations, he was able to capture the excitement and enthusiasm of the immediate postwar period. But the evolving maturity and changing status of evangelicalism in the North American context, along with radical changes in the world context in succeeding years, have precipitated corresponding changes in evangelical theologies of mission. These were traced schematically in an ambitious paper, "Developments in Evangelical Theology of Mission, 1946-1986," presented by Charles Van Engen of Western Theological Seminary.

The case studies in this section offered some interesting contrasts. "Born Again Taiwan: Evangelical and Pentecostal Communities in the Republic of China, 1945-1985," contrasting established evangelical Protestant missions with an indigenous Chinese church, the True Jesus Church, was presented by an outsider to the evangelical community, Murray Rubinstein of Baruch College, City University of New York. The other two papers were more or less "in-house" treatments of sharply contrasting approaches to missions in Latin America: "Rebels with a Cause: Origins of the Evangelical Revolution in Latin America" by Everett Wilson of Bethany Bible College, and "American Catholic Mission to Latin America" by Edward Cleary, O.P., of Josephinum School of Theology.

The final session of the conference was appropriately de-

voted to "Global Evangelicalism: Third World (or, as most of the participants referred to it, "Two-Thirds World") Theology and the Church's World Mission." C. Rene Padilla, general secretary of the Latin American Theological Fraternity, called attention to "Evangelical Mission Perspectives from Latin America." In "Leadership Training, A Top Priority in Asia," Bong Rin Ro, general secretary of the Asia Theological Association, made an urgent plea for evangelicals to encourage the training of Asians *in Asia* to evangelize Asia. Finally, in his paper, "The Right to Difference: The Common Roots of African Theology and African Philosophy," Tite Tienou of the Alliance School of Theology argued that African theologians have wasted the past thirty years because they have been forced to establish the legitimacy of "the right of difference" for African theology and philosophy rather than actually doing African theology and philosophy. But he feared that as long as the West controls the African economy and educational institutions, the quest for identity will need to continue.

Several tensions surfaced repeatedly during the conference, but were never resolved or even fully confronted because of the highly structured nature of the conference, which crammed twenty papers, a panel discussion, and an audio-visual presentation into less than three days. At the base of these tensions was a tension regarding the fundamental attitude toward the history of missions: should we distance ourselves from the

undeniable participation of past missionaries in various forms of cultural imperialism, or should we celebrate the remarkable but equally undeniable success of the past century of evangelical missions? The problem of confronting this tension was compounded by the diversity of the participants, which was at once the greatest strength and the greatest weakness of the conference. The ISAE should be congratulated for inviting the best historians of evangelical missions regardless of their theological (or atheological) perspective. And gathering diverse participants can, in fact, be one of the best means of confronting the issues this conference raised; but not in such a structured format, where participants tend only to speak past each other rather than engage in real dialogue. The participants never even agreed on who was to be included: Ralph Winter kept pushing in questions from the floor for the inclusion of evangelicals from the "mainstream," ecumenical denominations, not just the separate "faith missions."

Nevertheless, the conference succeeded admirably in launching a serious reassessment of the role of missions in the history of the North American evangelical community—a reassessment that would take into account the diverse actions of missionaries in the field as well as the already established motivations and theories of the mission boards. Since that, after all, was apparently the goal of the conference, it must be considered an overwhelming and welcome success.

Missiology Students Form Society

by Thomas Russell

"As 1886 marked the beginning of a missions movement around the rallying cry of evangelization, 1986 now marks the beginning of a new missionary dimension, of scholars throughout the world linking to study and advance the kingdom on earth."

George Hunsberger, president of the newly-formed Fellowship of Students Missiology (FSM), made this remark at the first meeting of the society, held last June in Chicago. This meeting was held in conjunction with the annual gatherings of the American Society of Missiology (ASM) and The Association of Professors of Missions. Eight of the group's charter members were present including: George Hunsberger, Scott Sunquist, Garry Parker and Efiang Utak (all of Princeton Theological Seminary), Kathleen Dillman (Golden Gate Theological Seminary), Ruy Costa (Boston University School of Theology), Richard Jones (Toronto School of Theology) and Tom Russell (Vanderbilt University). Several of the group's founding friends offered their advice as well.

At the June meeting FSM members had some intriguing discussions. On Thursday evening, June 19th, the group met with Dr. Matthew Zahnizer of Asbury Theological Seminary and Dr. Zachery Hayes of The Catholic Theological Union, both of whom offered presentations concerning Christology and Pluralism. Zahnizer spoke out of his experience as a missionary to Moslems, and presented Jesus Christ as the only and unique means for salvation. Hayes spoke of a cosmic Christ who is present in the world's religions. Conferees noted how well the speakers complemented each other and how

they were willing to interact with them. Friday morning Ruy Costa offered a paper on the relationship between religion and liberation. All participants were inspired by these interactions and felt the value of FSM fellowship!

On Friday afternoon the group held a business meeting to organize itself. Hunsberger reminded the society of its reason for existence at this time by stressing the need for budding missiologists to be in contact with each other. This contact would provide a locus for scholarly interaction and fellowship. As one FSM member put it, "I appreciate the fact that the FSM gets me in touch with others who have an interest in this field. I am the only one at my school with an interest in missiology and you know, it gets lonely out here!"

Meeting attendees established three purposes for the society. These young scholars affirmed the world mission of the church and stressed their need to provide mutual support and encouragement for each other. They also decided to cultivate relationships with the broader community of missiologists, particularly those of the ASM.

The FSM drew up plans to form a local and international network of missiology students, to publish an annual journal (beginning in January, 1987) and to hold an annual meeting (in conjunction with the annual meeting of the ASM).

Membership in the FSM is limited to students in Master's and Doctoral programs in Missiology and students in other graduate programs with an interest or concentration in Missions. The organization has been delighted to have student members representing Fuller Theological Seminary, Westminster Theological Seminary, Wheaton College, San Francisco Theological Seminary, Southern Methodist University, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, The University of

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