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Africa Journal Of Evangelical Theology

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Cover: The emblem of Scott Theological College, shown on the cover, features the Mumbu Tree, a historic and cultural landmark on the College grounds. The Mumbu Tree is used by AJET as a symbol of the gospel in Africa. The good news of Christ, like the Mumbu Tree, is ageless, enduring and firmly rooted in African soil.

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Editorial: Of Empty Pockets and Empty Souls

Commenting on the current state of the former Soviet union, Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko chided western political observers for their fear that Russia's economic woes might return the communists to power. If the communists make a comeback, argued Yevtushenko, it would not be because of economic need but because of the ideological vacuum within Russian society. "We should know by now", wrote Yevtushenko, "that the empty soul is always more dangerous than the empty pocket."

In Africa, where poverty and its complications are so acute, Yevtushenko's observation still rings true. There are empty pockets everywhere and this is cause for concern and action. Far more dangerous, however, are the empty souls that fill African cities, crowd African schoolrooms and drift through African churches and mosques. Africans need something to believe in. Kwame Nkrumah knew this back in the

1950s and he put himself forward as the black messiah. His essential message to Ghanaians at home and other nationalists across Africa was "believe in me I am the way, the truth and the life." In his own familiar parody of Matthew 6:33 he called on Ghanaians to "seek first the political kingdom and all these other things will be added unto you." Empty souls put their faith in Nkrumah only to be sadly disillusioned.

Africa needs development but she also needs direction. Africa needs something to eat but she also needs someone to believe in. Africa needs Jesus Christ not just because he can give her bread but because he can fill her soul. The gospel of John tells the story of Christ meeting the woman at the well. If ever a woman was a candidate for AIDS it was she. She seemed to sleep around for sport and went through husbands the way some people go through candy bars. That she was poor is suggested by the fact that she had to fetch her own water—a weary and time consuming task all too familiar to rural Africans. She had empty pockets. But Christ saw a greater danger in her eyes than thirst or hunger. He saw an empty soul. "Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst", declared Jesus. "Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14).

This issue of *AJET* is concerned about both empty pockets and empty souls. The opening article by Daystar university lecturer Bernard Boyo about pastoral salaries addresses an important practical problem facing our churches—the problem of underpaid clergy. Samuel Owen and Musa Gaiya address the issue of empty souls as they look at renewing evangelism on the one hand and renewing contextual theological reflection on the other.

These are issues addressing Africa's empty souls. Behind all three articles stands the Christ who met the woman at the well. Ideas alone cannot fill either pockets or hearts but the Christ of John 4 can take good ideas, like he once took water at a wedding, and turn them into a wine that renews both soul and body.

Editor's Note:

Though *AJET* has fallen behind in its publishing schedule the editors are confident that we will be up to date within the next six to eight months. Due to the several issues that will be forthcoming over those months and due to the need to move swiftly to get each issue to the press, the editors wish to inform our readers that indexes for volumes 13-15 will appear in issue 15.2 and not in the second issue of each volume as has been our past practice.

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A Church's Responsibility to Support its Pastor

Bernard Boyo

One of the issues facing the African church is that of adequate salaries for pastors. Not all churches give their pastors sufficient payment. I think, for example, of the Africa Inland Churches of Nyandarua, Kenya where churches have failed to adequately meet their obligations in supporting the pastors financially. Insufficient support has brought about numerous problems that have affected the church's ministry in Nyandarua. The monthly salary given to a "full-time" pastor is too little compared to the needs that he has for his sustenance and that of his family. Consequently, most pastors have sought outside jobs, such as farming, in order to earn adequate income. In effect, the church suffers from "spiritual malnutrition" because pastors cannot give their full attention to the ministry. The pastor's divided effort causes a lack of spiritual nurture and lack of church growth.

One cause of the inadequate salaries is the church's lack of proper biblical teaching on pastoral support. Therefore, it is necessary to have a clear

understanding of the responsibilities of the church in supporting the pastors.

The purpose of this article is to determine whether the church in which a pastor is ministering has a definite biblical obligation to meet the pastor's needs so that he does not need to engage in outside jobs. It is worth pointing out that the pastoral ministry is more than just a job in which one ventures. Lamont correctly observes that those who spend their lives in the ministry have been called by the Lord. This sense of calling is more crucial than the wages that the minister should receive. (Lamont, 52). Since pastoral ministry is a calling from the Lord, we shall also seek to establish what the Lord says about pastoral support.

In order to meet its purpose, we will exegete 1 Corinthians 9:7-14 to determine the rights of a gospel minister. The paper will also seek to ascertain the teaching and practice of the early church on the issue of pastoral support. Other passages to be exegeted are Galatians 6:6, 1 Timothy 5:17,18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13. Having established the biblical teaching on

pastoral support, biblical guidelines, and application for the Africa Inland Churches in Nyandarua shall be drawn.

1 Corinthians 9:7-14: Background and Context

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul deals with personal rights. He is responding to the Corinthians questions regarding the eating of meat that has been sacrificed to idols. The question that the Corinthians may have asked Paul might have been, "What is wrong with eating food that has been sacrificed to idols? It can do us no harm. We have knowledge. We know that there is but one God and that there is no such thing as an idol!" (Gilmour, 690). In response, Paul agrees with them but points out that "...out of consideration for those brethren who, ... have not been emancipated from such belief, [they should] refrain from sitting at table in an idol's temple" (Gilmour, 690). Paul seems to be arguing that "unless one is governed in all his doings by the principle of consideration for others ... he may by his thoughtlessness to sin against Christ" (Gilmour, 690). In view of this principle, Paul at the end of chapter 8 "undertook to abstain from eating meat for the rest of his life, if eating meat should prove to be prejudicial to the interests of his Christian brother" (Barrett, *Corinthians*, 199). He calls upon his

readers to willingly give up their personal rights as regards the eating of meat for the sake of others (8:9-13).

To support his renunciation of personal rights, Paul cites his own example in chapter 9, which forms "part of the discussion of the question as to eating food that has been offered to idols ..." (Robertson and Plummer, *Corinthians*, 176). Paul's argument here on the exercise of the believers freedom "leads him to expand the theme of Christian freedom and apply it in a wider context than that of sacrificial meat" (Mare, 241-242). Having shown the Corinthians the need for renunciation of personal rights, Paul "points out that his habitual forbearance is greater than that which he would occasionally claim from them" (Robertson and Plummer, 176-177).

Whereas this seems to be the background in which Paul derives his defense on personal rights, some scholars have divorced chapter 9 from chapter 8. Conzelmann for instance points out that:

Chapter 9 surprisingly introduces a new theme: the apostleship of Paul . . . While it is certainly possible to see a comprehensive theme in the topic of freedom, yet it is not enough to explain that state of the text. For in chapter 9 the

freedom that is discussed is not the same as in chapter 8. Its sense cannot be discovered from the connection with chapter 8, but in the first instance only from chapter 9 itself (Conzelmann, 151).

This would be a wrong way of looking at the argument brought about by Paul in chapter 9. His major concern here is to straighten the concepts and thoughts of those in the Corinthian church “who overstressed their rights to the detriment of others. He told them that this was selfishness on their part” (Abogunrin, 96). The suggestion of divorcing chapter 9 from chapter 8 is unfortunate since Paul seeks to respond to the Corinthian’s question regarding their eating meat sacrificed to idols (chapter 8). He explains it more vividly by using his personal example in view of the denial of his apostolic rights (chapter 9). As Hargreaves points out:

In chapter 8 Paul has said, you have the right to eat food which has been offered to idols. But be willing to give up that right for the sake of other Christians. In the same way, I, as an apostle, have the right to receive payment. But I have given up that right, so that no one should say that I am preaching in order to make money. I have given up that

right, so that as many people may accept the good news about Jesus (Hargreaves, 109).

This development of thought clearly shows the close connection between the two chapters. Abogunrin observes correctly that:

The chapter is an illustration of apostolic privileges and why he did not use these privileges . . . Paul shows a better way of exercising Christian freedom. Paul renounces some of his apostolic rights for the sake of the Gospel. He sacrifices his rights in order to accommodate himself to all men for the purpose of winning them to the Gospel (Abogunrin, 96)

In order to adequately defend his apostolic rights, Paul first establishes his apostleship. As Godet points out, Paul’s enemies were “alleging that if he did not make his churches maintain him, it is because he did not feel himself to be the equal of the apostles” (Godet, 429). It is evident that some people at Corinth (2 Cor. 12:11-12) and elsewhere (Gal. 1:1; 1:15-2:10) questioned Paul’s genuine apostleship and he had to defend it. In 9:1-3 Paul establishes the reality of his apostleship from which he derives his apostolic rights to maintenance (v. 4-14). Paul then bases his argument on the rights of the gospel

minister to be supported by the church in which he is ministering.

Having defended his apostleship and established his and Barnabas' rights as apostles, Paul seeks to authenticate his assertions. He nevertheless explains that he freely abnegated himself of his rights (v. 12) to get full support from the church.

Paul uses some strong arguments and reasons to illustrate to the Corinthians the rights that he has as an apostle. He argues from five areas: "common practice, scriptural precept, intrinsic justice, Jewish custom and Christ's command" (Prior, 153). He uses a set of rhetorical questions in illustrating his points of claiming support from the church. He bases his argument on the principle of remuneration observed in common life. It is human expectation and practice that, "those who addict and give themselves up to any way of business in the world expect to live out of it" (Henry, 549). The soldier expects to receive his pay due him because of his service. The term used here means, according to Walter Baur, "ration" or "money" paid to a soldier as "pay" or "wages". This is the predominant meaning and "the only one in the LXX" (Baur, 602). This meaning has in this context, an idea of "expenses" which, "though applying primarily to the soldier's food, it may cover his pay and his outfit generally" (Robertson and

Plummer, *Corinthians*, p.182). Gordon Fee, quoting C.C. Caragounis, says that this term

must not be understood in the sense approximating that of 'wages'. The word has to do with 'provisions', not salary, and is almost certainly both how Paul understood it and what he is here arguing for himself. He is not to be 'paid' for services rendered, but 'provided for' by those who owe their lives to him. (Fee, *Corinthians*, p.405).

From these considerations, we can deduce that a soldier has a right to be supported while in the service. Nevertheless, the provisions do not necessarily have to be in the form of salary but a kind of stipend without which the soldier cannot work. Thus, "the soldier gets his equipment and his uniform, without which he cannot fight" (Prior, 154).

The other argument is derived from the farm whereby Paul points to two kinds of farmers: the vine-dresser and the shepherd. The farmer plants, dresses, and cultivates vineyards anticipating and expecting the fruits thereof. The latter tends the flock with an expectation of being fed by it. These normal life illustrations clarify the human pattern of life. The farmer is to eat from the produce of his labour.

These examples clearly indicate that every labourer has a right to expect a comfortable life from his toil. Labour of all kinds must be rewarded so as to maintain the labourer. This sums up Paul's argument that, as one expects to be sustained by his labours, so it is also true with the apostle. "He should expect to be sustained from his "produce" or "flock" — the church that owes its existence to him" (Fee, *Corinthians*, 405).

To make his argument more vivid, Paul turns to the law's demands. As Leon Morris points out, "Paul repudiates the thought that the principle he is enunciating and illustrating from various fields of human endeavour rests simply on human wisdom" (Morris, *Corinthians*, 134). He does not seek to rest with the illustration deduced from the human sphere which is simply "from a human point of view". Paul is here saying that, "It is not merely in accordance with human judgment of what is fitting that he lays down the principle that a labourer has a right to a living wage. There is higher authority than that." (Robertson and Plummer, 183). Quoting from Deuteronomy 25:4 (the prohibition to muzzle the ox when treading the grain) in v. 9, Paul goes beyond the application which essentially has to do with the protection of animals (Conzelmann, 154). On the one hand, there is a sense in which "the law is not

made for irrational beings, but for those that have mind and reason" (Barrett, *Corinthians*, 205). On the other hand, there is the "kindly and beneficent regulation for the oxen when threshing" (Barrett, *Corinthians*, 205) evident in the law. This would indicate that "Paul did not mean that God did not care about the animals" (Barrett, *Corinthians*, 205). In his argument that the law was written for us, Paul sees the law figuratively speaking of men as indicated by *pantos* which signifies 'entirely, absolutely' (Godet, 440). In this case therefore, "The *pantos* for us signifies that in thus legislating, it was man's moral good, and not the satisfying of oxen, that God had in view" (Godet, 441). Hence, the primary application of the words of the law lies with man and not with oxen.

To make the argument more forceful, Paul applies another analogy from farming which also makes "the point that he has the right to their material support" (Fee, *Corinthians*, 409). The principle that he seems to underscore is that the labour should enjoy the products of his labour. He stresses that he had a right to be supported by the Corinthian church. The church was obligated to support those who had laboured among them. To make his argument more specific, Paul emphatically challenges the Corinthians to place more weight on the message

which he had preached along with the other “founders” of the church. “They [the Corinthians] are the soil which has benefited by the seed scattered with so much labour”, from which the wages would originate (Godet, 446). He is emphasizing that “what the apostle gave was incalculable in its richness, what he might have claimed, but never took, was a trivial advantage” (Robertson and Plummer, *Corinthians*, 185). Paul had a right to get his support from the Corinthian church just like other workers who came to Corinth after him.

Paul proceeds on to vindicate the right of his apostleship by calling upon the Corinthians “to look no further than the Jewish temple to see the same principle in daily operation” (Prior, 155). He uses the example of temple servants. He says that, “those who are employed in [the temple] and especially those who minister at the altar, get their share in the sacrificial flesh or cereal and so have the food supplied from the altar (cf. Numbers 18:8ff)” (Bruce, 85). Using the same principle, “the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel” (v.14). Though not directly quoting from the Lord, it is probable that Paul has in mind the sayings of Jesus in Matthew 10:10 and Luke 10:7. This “command” is not given to the preachers, but, as indicated by the dative, it is to their favour. Thus, “Paul

spells out an extremely powerful case for claiming all his personal rights, not merely as a Christian, but as an apostle” (Prior, 156). The gospel minister has a right to be supported by the church in which he is ministering. Paul authenticates this idea by looking at “reason and common experience; the Old Testament; universal religious practice; the teaching of Jesus Himself; all [of which] support the custom by which apostles (and other ministers) are maintained at the expense of the church which is built up by the ministry” (Barrett, *Corinthians*, 208).

It is evident that Paul in the passage argues that “the labourer is worth his wages” (cf. Luke 10:7; 1 Timothy 5:18). In conclusion, Abogunrin correctly observes that:

while complete devotion is required of the ministers and servants of God, it is wrong to take for granted that all their service to God must be voluntary and unrewarded. It must be remembered that the most dedicated ministers are still human. They have to eat; be clothed; they need good housing and things that will make life comfortable for them and they need support, encouragement and backing in their efforts. It is wrong, neither fair nor charitable to underpay

ministers on the pretext that they must not be interested in earthly things and because their reward is in heaven. A Church of avaricious, ungrateful members can never be a source of inspiration to its minister. Rather than 'spoiling the market', Paul strongly defends those who are supported by the Church. Christians owe their spiritual leaders who sow among them spiritual seed part of their material wealth (Abogunrin, 98-99).

We note that Paul in this passage does not simply argue for the remuneration of one's work. On the contrary, one gets a compensation from his work "in the sense that one receives a share of that which one does [cf. vv. 10, 12]. One is not simply rewarded with an external reward. There is instead an intrinsic connection between one's activity and one's recompense" (Nasuti, 250). We also derive the concept of pastoral support from the life and the practice of the early church.

The Teaching and Practice of the Early Church

The obligation of the church to support the pastoral ministry is not only derived from this passage but also from the life of the early church beginning with the ministry of Jesus Himself. Jesus' needs

together with those of the Apostles (his disciples) were met by the women who followed him (Luke 8:2-3). These women followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs (cf. Mark 15:40-41; Matthew 27:55). It is in line with Jesus' teaching, when he sent out the seventy-two on a preaching mission that, "the worker deserved his wages" (Luke 10:7). This concept seems to have dominated the life of the early church. The Apostles not only expected to live by their preaching ministry but also taught the church to support those who laboured among them.

The Teaching of Galatians 6:6

Another relevant passage is Galatians 6:6. Paul admonishes the believers to share all good things, including material things, with those who have given them instructions on spiritual matters (Hendriksen, 236). This verse has raised some questions among many biblical scholars. The issue is whether it has any connection with what precedes or it stands as an isolated statement or whether it introduces the next section (Guthrie, 145). The construction here clearly shows that verse 6 is not independent since there is a connecting "but" at the beginning of the verse. This indicates that this verse logically follows verse 5 (Betz, 304). Not only does this verse find placement in the preceding verses but also has further explanation in the following verses

(v. 7ff). This explanation given by Paul (vv. 7-9) adds more weight to the believer's responsibility "to shoulder the financial support of the Pastors-teachers in the church" (Campbell, 610). Paul argues that depending on where he sows, each person decided what his harvest will be. Sowing in the flesh provides fading harvest while using funds to support the ministry, thus sowing in the spirit, produces a harvest that will last eternally. Paul continues to urge the Galatians not to lose heart or be discouraged because the harvest is delayed. He nevertheless encourages them to be patient since the harvest will surely come in God's appointed time, both here below in part and more fully "at the judgment seat of Christ" in the next life (Campbell, 610). Thus Galatians 6:6 fits within the context of pastoral support. Campbell points out that, "though a broader application the principle is legitimate, it seems clear that Paul was dealing primarily with the question of financial support of Christian workers in the Galatian churches" (Campbell, 610). With this close connection between verse 6 and the preceding verses, Paul emphasizes that each man should bear his own burden, and at the same time, share the responsibilities of his teachers (Guthrie, 145). The one being instructed in the word should have partnership with the

instructor. This sharing includes the financial support (Guthrie, 145).

Paul is saying that, "the labourer deserves his wages". Since "the teacher relieves the ignorance of the pupil; the pupil should relieve the teacher of concern for his subsistence" (Bruce, 263). In other passages dealing with "pastoral support", Paul emphasizes the right of the preacher or teacher to claim his support. In this passage he puts it to the believers that it is their duty to provide materially for their teachers (Bruce, 263). This clearly outlines the scriptural teaching on the obligation of the church to support those who have given their lives to preach and teach the word. As Lightfoot correctly observes, "the obligation of the hearers of the word to support the ministers of the word is again and again insisted upon by St. Paul, though he seldom asserted his own claims" (Lightfoot, 218). Paul freely chose to preach without claiming any material or financial support. He nevertheless asserted strongly that the ministers of the Gospel should be supported by the gospel (Bruce, 263). It is worth noting that the Galatian church was obligated to support the "pastors" in all things. It is the responsibility of those being taught to seek the welfare of their teachers. They must provide the teachers with the necessities of life. Paul clearly points this out in saying that anyone who receives instructions in

the word must share all good things with his instructor. This sharing provides for him eternal life, since he has sown in the spirit by supporting a spiritual endeavour.

The Teaching of 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13

Paul not only expected the church to support its ministers but also to maintain a good working relationship. The Church should do this by having the right attitude toward the ministers (1Thess.5:12,13). We need to note with Howard Marshall that honour and respect given to individuals in the New Testament perspective is not given by virtue of their personality or status but “on the basis of the spiritual task to which they are called” (Marshall, 149). The pastors are servants who do not need to seek for personal glory, but are entitled to it because of the nature of their work (Marshall, 149). As Leon Morris observes, the church at Thessalonica might have been encountering a prevailing restlessness in which it failed to receive with respect those that had authority over them. Paul, therefore addressed the church urging them to respect their leaders in a proper manner (Morris, 97-98). Paul admonished the church to “respect” the leaders (v.12) and to “esteem” them (v.13). The leaders who should get this respect and esteem are “them that labour among you, and are over you in

the Lord, and admonish you”. Paul stresses that the church should not only appreciate the true worth of the spiritual leaders but should also place them in their rightful position. This is because they have “toiled till they [have become] weary in the service of the church” (Morris, 165). The labour that the church leaders are involved in is so broad and includes the various types of duties in the church that pertain to leadership and admonition (Hiebert, 232). These leaders might have been giving voluntary services to the Church, they might have been official leaders or office bearers (Moore, 80). Whether they were officially assigned in their labour or served voluntarily, Paul calls upon the church to respect them.

Not only does he require the church to respect them but also to esteem them. Paul wants the church leaders to be loved “and not thought of simply as the cold voice of authority” (Morris, 167). He emphasizes that the church is to esteem their rulers in love for their work’s sake and not on their personalities. This is because, “the church cannot be expected to do its work effectively if the leaders are not being loyally supported by their fellows” (Morris, 167). The term “esteem” has the general meaning of “to think”, “consider”, “regard” or “to give careful and deliberate consideration to something or someone” (Hiebert, 233).

This whole phrase is therefore a strong plea by Paul for the spiritual leaders to be highly regarded. They are to be so regarded because of the work that they are performing. The thought behind the respect is that the teachers “can never do their best work when they are subject to carping criticism from those who should be their followers” (Morris, 99).

Having analyzed this admonition of Paul to the Thessalonian church, we note that he is not urging for any form of financial support. On the contrary, he is calling for the due respect and honour that the spiritual leaders deserve. This will not only imply a good working relationship between the teacher and the “students” but will also enhance mutual support that the teachers ought to receive. Unless and until the spiritual leaders’ task is given the due recognition, even the support that they deserve, both material and financial, will not be given as it should. It is essential that Paul gave this instruction to the church so that it can see the sense of responsibility springing from the respect and honour owed the pastor.

The Teaching of 1 Timothy 5:17,18

In this passage Paul teaches that spiritual leaders are to receive double honour. The ‘elders’ are not only to be properly honoured but also properly

paid. Paul says that “the elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour” (1 Timothy 5:17). This verse can only be understood in view of verse 18 which begins with the preposition ‘for’ which implies that what follows will explain or give support for the contention of verse 17 (Fee, 1 Timothy, 129). These two verses form a clear unit “telling Timothy and the church that the elders responsible for preaching and teaching are to receive honour, because scripture supports it” (Fee, 1 Timothy, 128).

Paul in essence says that those elders who rule well are worthy of double honour. These are the ones whose function is to superintend the congregation in the local church. They direct the affairs of the church well. They are tirelessly involved in the preaching and teaching of the word. They have devoted their time essentially for church ministry (Kent, 174). In this passage, the labourer is portrayed as toiling and growing weary in preaching and teaching the word. This labour must not be overlooked or minimized but should receive double reward, honorarium or salary. The double honour that Paul claims here is for those spiritual leaders who work hard in preaching and teaching the word. Different authors have given this passage various interpretations. It is worth noting that, the double honour

implied by Paul here is for those elders whose labour is to direct the affairs of the church well, especially in teaching and preaching. As Hendriksen correctly observes,

an elder deserves to be honoured; particularly if his labor excels in quality. This honor is due especially to those who labor in preaching and teaching. And this implies, of course, that whenever it is necessary (and it would be necessary especially in the case of the “minister”) the work should also be rewarded in a material way. A man who spends all his time and effort in kingdom-work (a “minister”) certainly deserves “a good salary” (Hendriksen, 180).

In making this claim for pastoral or ministerial support more emphatic, Paul in verse 18 brings in view the Deuteronomic law. The argument he raises here, as he does in 1 Cor.9, has the same interpretation. A.E. Harvey notes that “we must assume [that Deut.25:4] had already become a standard scriptural proof-text for use whenever the matter of the payment of ministers was raised. And that is to say, Scripture also says - ‘The workman is worthy of his hire’ (Harvey, 212). The usage in the OT context does not have the implication given here. But, it is

worth noting that this Deuteronomic passage about oxen was “generally accepted [in the early church] as relevant to the payment of ministers” (Harvey, 212). In giving the nation Israel various laws upon which to lead a harmonious life within the society, God affixes the law concerning oxen. The oxen were used to tread or thread grains upon harvesting and this they would do all day long. It would appear inhuman to have the oxen work while muzzled such that they would not be able to eat anything at all while they work. The same principle applies in the African context where animals are used to provide labour. The amount of work that they do and the time they spend doing it is enormous compared to the few hours that they are let loose to feed on the “dry grass fields”. It is essential therefore that God gave the law for men to have concern for these animals which were so useful to them. In the same way, it would be illogical to expect a labourer to work without getting sufficient support for his sustenance from his labour. Likewise, the gospel minister who works tirelessly yet the church fails to support him as he deserves will inevitably lose his zeal for work. It is with this respect that Paul, quoting the Scripture as well as the words of Jesus in Luke 10:7, emphasizes that “the gospel minister (worker) deserves his wages”. Jesus’

giving of this command depicts clearly the NT understanding of the need for pastoral support. This scriptural saying is open to a wider application. It can be applied, not only to “the general matters of the remuneration of ministers in the church, but to the quite specific question of how much they should be paid” (Harvey, 212). A wage is the remuneration that a labour receives in return for services rendered. here, we find Paul “[reiterating] a point made elsewhere that those who give leadership to the community in the ministry of the word should be maintained by the community . . .” (Fee, 1 Timothy, 129).

It is therefore evident that Paul’s emphasis in this passage is to have the ‘Pastor’ receive his pay from the church in which he has given his entire life to minister. As Barclay points out: “A man’s reward must always be proportioned to a man’s toil . . . It is those [pastors] who toil in preaching and teaching who are honoured.” (Barclay, 134).

Concluding Summary of the Passages

In these passages we note that the early church’s teaching and practice indicates that the church was fully responsible to honour and provide for the maintenance of those who gave their lives to labour in the church on a day to day basis. It was an obligation that the church had

which came as a command from the Lord. The church therefore has the responsibility to adequately support the pastors who labour among them, whether they demand the pay or not.

There is scriptural proof from the teachings of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:7-14 that pastoral ministry should be supported by the church. The teaching and practice of the early church as seen in Galatians 6:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13 and 1 Timothy 5:17,18 has the same emphasis. In view of these teachings, it is necessary to draw some applicational guidelines for pastoral support in the Africa Inland Church of Nyandarua.

Applicational guidelines

The Kikuyu people of the central province of Kenya had a song they used to sing during the colonial days as they worked in the plantations of their white masters. The message of the song was directed to the white employer. He was told that “the work is the stomach” and failure to satisfy their hunger meant they would relax in their labour. This analogy clearly indicates that if labour is to be fruitful, then the labourer’s needs should and must be sufficiently met. This will motivate him so that he can work hard and joyfully. Likewise, the pastor should receive full financial support from the local church in which he is ministering. It is the responsibility of the believers to maintain the pastor

adequately in view of his ministry among them.

Looking at the biblical passages that have already been discussed, it was noted that the pastor has a right to be supported by the church. He has given his life for the service of the church and the church is his "labour-field". If "the labourer is worthy of his wages" and the pastor is labouring in the church, then it logically follows that it is his right to receive his wages from that very church. Just as a soldier cannot serve in the army at his own expense, so also the pastor cannot minister in a local church without being supported by the church. The support that the church must give the pastor is not only monetary but can also include the supply of other essential commodities like clothing, house equipment, foodstuffs, etc., as he may have need. It is worth bearing in mind that the pastor is a human being who, like any other worker, expects and hopes that his toil is not in vain. His expectation is that the labour will at least provide for him to lead a comfortable life for it is in order that the labourer live by his labour. This expectation should give the pastor encouragement to work hard for the ministry by giving all of his time to it. The pastor is therefore full-time and should earn his living from his pastoral work.

It is vital that the church recognizes the biblical obligation laid upon it to support the pastors. As Paul correctly asserts, "it is written in the law of Moses." The responsibility laid upon the shoulders of the church to support the pastors in view of their pastoral labour has its roots in God himself. No labourer should Labour in vain. As it was in the temple, the priests received their food supplies from the offerings of the temple. They did not have to go elsewhere in search of their sustenance but derived it from the very services that they were rendering before the Lord. The priests got their food from the temple and this helps expound the command that the oxen should not be muzzled while it is treading out the grain. The pastors likewise are to eat and comfortably live by the pastoral duties that they are offering. The church should therefore not withhold from the pastors or neglect to give them their rightful earnings (wages) from the church. On the contrary, it should encourage the pastor by meeting all his needs.

More forceful is the fact that "the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel" (1 Cor.9:14). It is the Lord's command that the church take the obligation to support the pastors seriously. It must seek to effect this obligation since it is imperative that

the pastors must be supported by the church. Pastoral support does not depend on the willingness of the church but is mandatory. This would erase the thought that most believers tend to have that the sustenance of the pastors is by faith and thus they (pastors) should not demand or claim to get any form of financial support if they have truly been called into the ministry. The church needs to realize that the pastor is not a beggar and when supporting him by way of providing for his needs, whether financially or materially, the church is not doing him any favour at all! Rather, the church is meeting the demand that the Lord, who is the head, has spoken. The authority for pastoral support by the church comes from the Lord. It is worth pointing out that the support that the church should give the pastor is not to be in part but in full. This implies that the support given to the pastor should be sufficient to meet his needs and those of his family without him having to look for outside jobs. Along with this, the church should note that the pastor is not a hireling to be tossed hither and thither just because he is getting his support from the church. He is worth the respect and honour from the church in which he is ministering. The church should give this honour, not because of the personality of the individual, but because of the nature of the work that he does. The church must

seek to maintain a good healthy relationship with the pastor so that he can be able to perform his duties well. In essence, they should not only give him financial support but also mutual support because of their love for him and for his work.

Apart from the fact that the church has an obligation to support the pastor financially, there is also the admonition given by Paul to the church. This has to do with sharing all good things with him. This indicates that the church should have at heart the welfare of the pastor and seek to give him all the necessary co-operation, support, and motivation, so that he can administer his duties with joy and satisfaction. The church will also enjoy his ministry. The fact that the church is to share all good things with the pastor indicates that the obligation for pastoral support is more than just the money that the pastor gets as his salary. On the other hand, the pastor who deserves support is the one who has given his full time for the ministry. Much as the pastor has the right to be supported by the church, he also has an obligation to serve the church well. He must have the welfare of the church at heart and seek every opportunity to render services to the church. This he should not do because of the hope of the support he is to receive, but in view of his calling and the responsibility that the Lord has

bestowed upon him to feed the flock. His first priority should be the ministry that the Lord has called him into.

In view of what has been observed above, we can draw out the following:

1. *The Church has an obligation to support the pastor.* This obligation comes from the Lord and the church should seek to fulfill it. The Lord commands that “those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel” (1 Cor.9:14).
2. *As a dedicated servant of the Lord who has yielded his life and time to serve in the church, the pastor has a right to be adequately supported by the church.* The church is his labour field and he should eat from it.
3. *The church must give the pastor the honour and respect due him because of the nature of his work. It should share all good things with him.*
4. *The pastor who deserves support from the church should be hard working.* He must “direct the affairs of the church well”. He must feed the flock by way of preaching and teaching the whole counsel of God.

Specific Applications

Having considered all these necessary points of application for the church regarding the support of pastors, it is essential that the Africa Inland Churches of Nyandarua reexamine their understanding and practice of pastoral support. A vast majority of the

pastors serving here have at least five or more local churches in which they minister individually. The amount of work that the pastor is expected to do is so much yet the financial support given is so little. As a result, they have to look for other means of income to meet their needs. These supplementary jobs cost the pastor his precious time of ministry. If the church expects to be served by the pastors more efficiently, then it must see as its obligation, the need to meet all his needs. By clearly understanding the scriptural mandate that “the labourer is worthy of his wages”, the church can utilize the pastor’s capabilities and thus enhance more spiritual growth.

As noted above, the churches in Nyandarua need to realize that the support that they are obligated to give the pastors does not necessarily have to be financial. Since most church members are farmers while others are businessmen, they can supply the pastor with the items (possessions and crops) that they have. This will help meet some of the needs of the pastor. This can be done privately or publicly. Church members can pledge so as to avoid duplication of commodities. The church also needs to improve on their offerings especially on tithing, which forms part of the pastor’s salary. The church gives so little that it fails to meet its bills save the amount dedicated for the pastor’s

salary. If the church members are faithful in their tithing, then the problem of meeting the needs of the pastor will not arise.

The Nyandarua believers also need to realize that they owe their pastor respect and honour in view of his duties among them. They need to consider him with high regard and therefore they should take seriously his welfare. In their support of the pastor, they should do it generously and with joy as unto the Lord. As Christians, they should be governed and guided by the principle of love for the other before self. They should consider the rising cost of living. As Robins points out, "Like everyone else, ministers and their families are concerned about the inflationary erosion for their income" (Robins, 36). Due to rising rate of inflation, the church should always review the pastor's salary. This will ensure that the pastor does not receive less support while the demand of his expenditure is higher.

In an attempt to meet the needs of the pastors adequately, the churches in Nyandarua need to consider the size of the pastor's family and the amount that he has to spend in paying his children's school fees. This will help determine the pastors need so that he gets the support that he needs. In order to ease this work, the church should appoint a pastoral support committee. This committee will act as the church's

advisor on what amount the church needs to give the pastor. Each member of the church needs to commit himself or herself to support the pastor. The committee should organize a commitment program and "let persons make the type of commitment which is most relevant to them." The committee should devise commitment forms and "leave a lot of open space for [the people] to frame the obligation that they are willing to make" (Rieke, 12).

On the other hand, the pastors need to realize that the church looks upon them for spiritual nourishment and thus they must dedicate themselves to this wholeheartedly. The church can at times lose the zeal to maintain the pastor if they see a lack of dedication on his part. This is to say that the pastor who deserves "double honour" is the one who ministers well. If the pastors take their duties seriously and work without being money-minded then the Lord will move the church to meet their financial needs. This works with the principle that a hard-working labourer receives the best out of his labour. If the pastor has in mind that he is working because he has been called by the Lord, then he will have a better perspective of his work. Whereas he is to receive his pay here and now, more treasure awaits him in the life to come. This attitude will give him more

determination and satisfaction in spite of the demands lying before him.

In view of these considerations, the following should be pointed out:

1. *The church should consider seriously the welfare of the pastor.* The amount given to the pastor by the church should be sufficient enough to meet his needs in consonant with the living standards of his church members.
2. *If the church expects the pastor to minister well, then it (the church) must support him adequately.* This will help prevent him from getting outside jobs to supplement his living.
3. *The support given the pastor can also be material in kind.* Farmers for example can supply the pastor with the necessary foodstuffs that he needs.
4. *The pastor should take his duties or services more seriously by devoting most of his time to the ministry.*
5. *In order to help ease the work of supporting the pastor the churches in Nyandarua should consider appointing a pastoral support committee.*

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has shown that the church has an obligation to support the pastor. This responsibility is instituted by God and the church should take heed in fulfilling its duty toward the pastor. The churches in Nyandarua should therefore consider the issue of pastoral support more seriously. They should re-examine their commitment to

support these spiritual leaders without whom the church would die spiritually. The demands for the church to support the pastor comes from the Lord as found in the words of Jesus which were propagated and practiced by the early church. The modern church should and must devise its pattern of life from the scripture. If the idea of supporting the pastoral ministry is scriptural, then the church has no alternative but to fulfill its duty to support those men who have given their lives for the ministry.

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Evangelism: Theology, Message, and Methods

by *Samuel A. Owens*

If one goes by the current evangelistic statistics being bandied about in the Christian community today, the conclusion would logically follow that revival is breaking out in various places around the world. For example, we hear that there are over 75 million "born again" persons in the United States; that over 16,000 people per day are being added to the church in sub-Saharan Africa, that Kenya is a Christian nation. Mission groups and individuals share fantastic "war stories" of the vast numbers who "make a decision" for Christ through their ministries.

But where are the people who have "made decisions?" Where is the evidence of these supposed "revivals?" Surely if true God-sent revival were taking place there would be tremendous change in the life-style of individuals and in the face of nations.¹ But, for the

most part, one searches in vain for such evidence:

What is the problem? How can so many "make decisions for Christ" with so little effect? It would appear to be the case, as J.I. Packer has noted, that much of modern ministry/evangelism may be characterized as "well meant, God-shrinking, success-oriented."² While not at all questioning the motives of most of the current evangelistic endeavors, far too often success has come to mean, not obedience to God and faithfulness to the message and methods consistent with His Word, but the numbers produced, how many "decisions" can be counted.

It is the contention here that our main problems in modern evangelism are theological: either having a faulty theology, or making a separation between theology and practice. There is an obvious correlation between belief and practice. Our practice demonstrates

our true beliefs, and our beliefs should govern our practice. And truth (theology) should determine our beliefs.

This article is an attempt to focus anew on the theological foundation of true evangelism, and the resultant consequences for our modern evangelical message and methods. It is a message which has been sounded by others;³ we wish to bring it before the eyes of the church afresh.

Theology and Evangelism

It is evident in evangelical circles today that there is a great disparagement of theology. It is seldom preached from the pulpit and infrequently read by Christians. Indeed, A.N. Martin has commented that modern evangelicals suffer from a mentality that regards doctrine and theology as a medieval hobgoblin!⁴ There is often an inability to see how theology and practice fit together, and when this happens it is usually theology that gets thrown out. From this theological dearth flow improper evangelistic methods and often a less-than-biblical evangelistic message.

While there are obviously many biblical doctrines that impinge on the evangelistic mandate of the Church, the following stand out as central to the task: the sinfulness of man, the grace of God, the nature of regeneration and conversion, and the basis of assurance. Let's look at these in turn.

The Sinfulness of Man

Scripture is clear and unequivocal that man is a sinner. Man is a sinner by his actions (Rom. 3:23; Isa. 53:6; Psalm 14:1-3; Ecc. 7:20) and by his relationship to Adam (Rom. 5:12-21), which includes the imputation of guilt⁵ and the impartation of a sinful nature. This latter truth, traditionally spoken of as the doctrine of "original sin," is the aspect that has the most bearing on our present discussion.

Original Sin Defined

Original sin may be defined as "the sinful state and condition in which men are born." It is so designated because: "1) it is derived from the original root of the human race (Adam); 2) it is present in the life of every individual from the time of his birth, and ; 3) it is the inward root of all the actual sins that defile the life of man."⁶ Simply stated it refers to the corruption of our whole nature.

The Bible clearly states that all aspects of man's being are corrupt. "By nature" we are children of wrath — that is, objects of wrath (Eph. 2:3). By actions we are also objects of God's wrath, but this verse refers to something innate. Psalm 51:5 teaches that this is something that we have from conception, not something acquired by actions during our lifetimes.

Every facet of man's being is affected by original sin.⁷ 1) His intellect

is blinded (2 Cor. 4:4). His mind is reprobate or disapproved (Rom. 1:28). His understanding is darkened, separated from the life of God (Eph. 4:18). 2) His affections are degraded and defiled (Rom. 1:21, 24, 26; Titus 1:15). 3) His will is enslaved to sin and therefore stands in opposition to God (Rom. 6:20; 8:6-7). 4) His heart is deceitful and "incurable" (Jer. 17:9). This pollution has been ably summarized by P.E. Hughes:

Original sin, however mysterious its nature may be, tells us that the reality of sin is something far deeper than the mere outward commission of sinful deeds.... It tells us that there is an inner root of sinfulness which corrupts man's true nature and from which his sinful deeds spring. Like a deadly poison, sin has penetrated to and infected the very center of man's being: hence his need for the total experience of rebirth by which, through the grace of God in Jesus Christ, the restoration of his true manhood is effected.⁸

Result of Original Sin - Total Spiritual Inability

When we speak about man's spiritual inability, we mean two things: 1) the unregenerate person cannot do, say, or

think that which totally meets with God's approval, and therefore totally fulfills God's law; and 2) the unregenerate person is unable apart from the special working of the Holy Spirit to change the basic direction of his life from sinful self-love to love for God.⁹

Man since the Fall has no ability to please God or to obey Him (cf. Jer. 13:23; John 3:3, 5; 6:44, 45, 8:34-36; 15:5; Rom 3:10-18; 5:6; 6:16, 20; 8:7-8; I Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-3; Rom 9:16, et.al.). This means "(a) that the radical moral dispositions of every man [are] opposed to that obedience/pleasing, and (b) man has absolutely no ability to change these dispositions or (c) to exercise volitions contrary to them."¹⁰

In other words, man is as bad off as he can be before God:

- He is *spiritually dead* Eph. 2:1
- He *walks* as a lifestyle in trespasses and sin Eph. 2:1-2
- He is an *enemy* of and *alienated* from God Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21
- He is *ruled* and *dominated* by *satan* and the *world* system Eph. 2:2
- He is *unable* to please God Rom. 8:8
- He is *unable* to be subject to the law of God Rom. 8:7
- He *cannot understand* spiritual truth I Cor. 2:14

□ He is under the *wrath* and *condemnation* of God John 3:18, 36 And the result is an utter inability to recover himself. Thomas Boston summarized man's predicament thusly:

Now, here is a threefold cord against heaven and holiness, not easily to be broken; a blind mind, a perverse will, and disorderly distempered affections. The mind, swelled with self-conceit, says, the man should not stoop; the will, opposite to the will of God, says, he will not; and the corrupt affections, rising against the Lord, in defence of the corrupt will, say, he shall not. Thus the poor creature stands out against God and goodness, till a day of power comes, in which he is made a new creature.¹¹

Man is helpless (Rom. 5:6) and hopeless (Eph. 2:12). The power of God must intervene! It must be the power of God in sovereign grace.

The Grace of God

The total depravity/inability is true, the human will cannot be the decisive factor in salvation. For the human will is in bondage to sin.¹² God must come in power to save if anyone is to be saved. As Scripture says, "the gospel is the

power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16).

The Scripture clearly testifies that salvation is by the grace of God (e.g., Eph. 2:5, 8). From election¹³ to God's call of sinners to salvation, through justification and its attendants to sanctification, perseverance, and glorification, salvation is of God and from God and to God. It is God's call to salvation which has the most intimate bearing on the issue at hand, the message and methods of evangelism.

The questions arise: What is the relationship of conversion to grace? of God's call to salvation? Is grace unnecessary, and man can naturally respond to the general gospel call (a denial of original sin/depravity/inability)? Is "prevenient" grace given to all men (overcoming depravity in all), enabling all to respond to the gospel call? Or is there an effectual grace/call of God (given only to the elect), wherein the Spirit powerfully works to change the disposition of the heart, leading the person so called to respond with repentance and faith?

Biblically, the call of God is seen in two different facets.¹⁴ Verbal (universal) calling (which is the emphasis of the word in the synoptic gospels) is the call which comes through the proclamation of the gospel, inviting (Matt. 11:28; John 7:37), urging (2 Cor. 5:20), and commanding

(Acts 2:38; 16:31; 17:30) sinners to repent and believe (see Matt. 22:14). The universal call is genuine, serious, and earnest:

It is the promise of the gospel that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be announced and declared without differentiation or discrimination to all nations and people, to whom God in his good pleasure sends the gospel.¹⁵

The effectual call (normal use of the word outside the synoptics) of God is not merely a general invitation but that mysterious yet effectual work of God through the Holy Spirit which brings man to saving faith in Jesus Christ. It always results in the salvation of God's elect. To those not called this way, the gospel remains foolishness (cf. I Cor. 1:21-25). See Rom. 8:30; 11:39; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 3:1; Col. 1:9; Acts 13:48; Phil. 1:29; John 6:44; 2 Pet. 1:10; 2 Thes. 2:14, et.al.¹⁶

God is thus the efficient cause of regeneration/conversion.¹⁷ Our salvation is of the will of the Father (James 1:18), through the resurrection of the Son (I Pet. 1:3; Col. 2:9), by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5, 6; Tit. 3:5). Note the statement of the

relationship between the divine and the human in the following verses: John 1:12-13; 3:16 (in the context of 3:5, 6); Acts 16:14; 13:48; Acts 5:31; 11:18; 18:27; 2 Tim. 2:25-26; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil 1:29; John 5:21; Eph. 2:5; I John 5:4; 2:29 (the one who "has been born..." - perfect passive); John 6:37, 44 ("dragged"), 45, 64, 65; John 10:3-6, 16, 26-29; Matt. 11:25; 16:15-17; 13:10, 11, 16; Luke 8:10; 10:21; I Pet. 1:3, 23; James 1:18; the uses of "call" - e.g., Rom. 8:30; 2 Tim. 1:9; I Cor. 1:9.

It is thus clear that, as the fourteenth century saint Thomas Bradwardine said (following Augustine), "When we act we are the ones who act, but He acts so that we may act." Salvation is a gift offered to all; it is a gift given to His elect.

Historically, the Protestant Reformers all were at one in these two points: the helplessness of man in sin and the sovereignty of God in grace; and in proclaiming these they were following in the footsteps of Paul; Augustine, Wycliffe, etc. (and of Jesus as is clearly seen in the gospel of John - e.g., 5:21; 6:37, 44, 65; 10:26; 17:6). Note the comments of Packer:

The doctrine of justification by faith was important to them because it safeguarded the principle of sovereign grace; but it actually expressed for them only one aspect of this

principle, and that not its deepest aspect. The sovereignty of grace found expression in their thinking at a profounder level still, in the doctrine of monergistic regeneration—the doctrine, that is, that the faith which receives Christ for justification is itself the free gift of a sovereign God, bestowed by spiritual regeneration in the act of effectual calling. To the Reformers, the crucial question was not simply, whether God justifies believers without works of law. It was the broader question, whether sinners are wholly helpless in their sin, and whether God is to be thought of as saving them by free, unconditional, invincible grace, not only justifying them for Christ’s sake when they come to faith, but also raising them from the death of sin by His quickening Spirit in order to bring them to faith. Here was the crucial issue: whether God is the author, not merely of justification, but also of faith; whether, the last analysis, Christianity is a religion of utter reliance on God for salvation and all things necessary to it, or of self-reliance and self-effort.

‘Justification by faith only’ is a truth that needs interpretation. The principle of *sola fide* is not rightly understood till it is seen as anchored in the broader principle of *sola gratia*. What is the source and status of faith? Is it the God-given means whereby the God-given justification is received, or is it a condition of justification which it is left to man to fulfill? Is it a part of God’s gift of salvation, or is it man’s own contribution to salvation? Is our salvation wholly of God, or does it ultimately depend on something that we do for ourselves? Those who say the latter...thereby deny man’s utter helplessness in sin...and [is] a betrayal of the Reformation (because it denied the sovereignty of God in saving sinners, which was the deepest religious and theological principle of the Reformers’ thought).¹⁸

As Spurgeon noted, “True religion is supernatural at its beginning, supernatural in its continuance, and supernatural in its close... It is *all of grace*.”¹⁹ This biblical truth obviously has ramifications for modern evangelicals in the message and

methods of sharing the good news of Christ.

The Nature of Regeneration

Regeneration is the act of God whereby spiritually dead persons are made alive (imparted with spiritual life) through the Holy Spirit. It is God's transformation of individual believers, His giving a new spiritual vitality and direction to their lives. It is entering into the blessings of the New Covenant (Ezek. 36:25-27; Jer. 31:31-34).

Regeneration is described variously in the New Testament. It is a new birth from above (John 3:3, 6-7); a "quickening" (making alive) (Col. 2:13; Eph. 2:4-5); a renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5); a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17); a "new man" (Eph. 4:24).

The nature of regeneration may be described thusly: 1) It is solely the work of God (John 1:13). It is a creation by divine generation. 2) It is an instantaneous change of man's nature from spiritual death to spiritual life. 3) It is decisive (2 Cor. 5:17). The regenerate man has ceased forever to be the man he was; the old life is over, a new life has begun. 4) It is mysterious (John 3:8).

From the nature of regeneration flow many consequences.²⁰ For example, Regeneration involves a whole reversal of the person's natural tendencies (Gal. 5:24-25) and a counteracting of the effects of sin (Eph. 2:1-10). It is the

beginning of a process of growth which continues throughout one's lifetime (Eph. 2:10). And it produces a "new sensitivity to spiritual things, a new direction of life, and an increasing ability to obey God"²¹ (I John 2:29; 3:4-9; 5:18; 2 Pet. 1:3ff; Rom 6:2).

In other words, when a person has been truly regenerated by God, his life changes. A life of faith and repentance is begun. Although indwelling sin remains and conflict is real (Rom 7; Gal. 5), the dominion of sin is broken (Rom 6), and he can no longer live a lifestyle of sin (I John 3:4-9). He does not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit, being led by the Spirit (Rom. 8). There is a God-consciousness and a God-directedness characteristic of his life, and he perseveres in holiness (Heb. 12:14; 3:6, 14).

The Nature of Conversion

Regeneration, the implanting of a new life within us, is inseparable from conversion, the action of a person in turning to Christ. It is spoken of variously as a "turning to God from idols to serve a living and true God" (I Thes. 1:9), "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21), "believing in the Lord Jesus" (Acts 16:31), etc. From Scripture it is evident that conversion involves two components—faith and repentance. These are not to be separated, for true

faith involves repentance and true repentance involves faith.

True saving faith involves the whole person. It involves the mind of man—Certain truths must be known.²² It involves the affections—an assent to the revelation of God's power and grace as applicable to the needs of the soul. It involves the will and heart—trust which shows itself in a surrender of the soul as guilty and defiled to Christ (Matt. 11:28-29) and a reception and appropriation of Christ as the source of pardon and life (John 1:12; Rom. 10:9, 10). True faith thus involves self-renunciation, reliance on Christ, and appropriation of Christ to ourselves.

Likewise, true repentance includes an intellectual aspect (a knowledge of the holiness and majesty of God, Isa. 6:5), an emotional aspect (a heartfelt sorrow for sin, 2 Cor. 7:10), and a volitional aspect (a turning from sin and a change of purpose and motivation, Matt. 16:24, e.g.). Biblically repentance is *metanoia*, a change of mind or heart, a change in the entire person and in his outlook on life; and it is *epistrepho*, a total change in behaviour, a reversal of one's life style, a complete turnaround.²³

At their core, both faith and repentance are mysteries: both are the task of man, yet both are the work and gift of God. We are commanded to believe, and justification is by faith

(Rom 3:28; 1:16; 10:17; John 3:16; 20:31; 1 John 5:4, Acts 16:31). Yet faith is the fruit of election (Acts 13:48); the result of regeneration (1 John 5:1; John 1:12-13) and an operation of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). The Father enables us to come to Jesus (John 6:65); Jesus is the Author of our faith (Heb. 12:2); and God is said to bestow faith (Phil 1:29; Eph 2:8-9). Likewise, repentance is the act of man (Isa. 55:7; Exek. 33:11; Matt. 4:17; Acts 3:19; 17:30; 26:18; 26:20) and is also the work/gift of God (Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25). Conversion is a deep miracle—a gift of God (e.g., Acts. 16:14) while at the same time the response of the one called in faith and repentance.²⁴

Thus, simply put, conversion, means commitment to God in response to mercy from God, and consists in repentance and faith. In Scripture these two overlap. Repentance is not just regretful remorse, but a total about-turn in one's thoughts, aims, and acts, so that one leaves the paths of self-willed disobedience to serve God in faith and faithfulness. Faith is not just believing Christian truth, but forsaking self-confidence and man-made hopes to trust wholly in Christ and his cross for pardon, peace,

and life, so that henceforth one lives to one's lover-God in thankful, penitent obedience.²⁶

The Basis of Assurance

From whence comes assurance of salvation, the settled conviction that one is truly converted and is indeed a child of God? In Scripture the assurance of salvation is grounded in three areas: the Word of God, the ministries of the Holy Spirit, and a changed life.

The first foundation of assurance is the Word of God. Involved in this foundation are 1) the recognition of the immutability of the gifts and calling of God; 2) an acceptance of the promises of God as true for me; and 3) an intelligent understanding of the nature of salvation: salvation reaches the highest place of privilege and blessing; the believer has been justified, regenerated, redeemed, reconciled—all by the propitiatory atonement of Christ and all of grace.

The second foundation of assurance are the ministries of the Holy Spirit. There is first of all the inner witness of the Spirit and the conviction He gives that I am a son of God (Rom. 8:16).²⁷ Secondly, there is His special working of making real the presence of God (John 14:21-23).

The third ground of assurance is the resultant life-style of the converted (2Pet. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; I John).²⁸

This life-style is ethical—obedience to

the commands of God (I John 2:3-6; 3:4-10), doctrinal—correct belief regarding Christ (I John 2:18-27; 4:1-6), and relational—love for the brethren (I John 2:7-11; 3:11-18; 4:7-21). These lead to confidence and assurance (I John 3:21; 5:13-21).

As we have noted in other areas, there is the possibility of both true and false assurance. True assurance involves the interplay of the three grounds mentioned above.²⁹ It is an assurance that may be more weak or strong at different periods of one's life. And an increase of assurance is continually to be sought in the communion with God which is on-going. But there is also a false assurance which can be had. We see many professing a saving relationship with Christ who are living like the devil, having no God-centered life nor a desire for holiness. Note the following contrast between true and false assurance:)

- 1). True assurance begets unfeigned humility; false assurance begets spiritual pride (I Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:14).
- 2). True assurance leads to increased diligence in the practice of holiness; the false leads to sloth and self-indulgence (Ps. 51:12, 13, 19).
- 3). True assurance leads to candid self-examination and a desire to be searched and corrected by God; the false leads to a disposition to be

satisfied with appearance and to avoid accurate investigation (Ps. 139:23, 24). 4). The true leads to constant aspirations after more intimate fellowship with God which is not true of false assurance (I John 3:2, 3).

5. True assurance rests upon what God says; false upon what man says (Heb. 6:17, 18; Ps. 118:8; Pr. 28:26).³⁰

These doctrines—the sinfulness of man, the sovereign grace of God, the nature of regeneration and conversion, the basis of assurance—are crucial in any evaluation of modern evangelistic methods and the message which is being shared. It is to these which we now turn.

The Message and Methods of Modern Evangelism

As one surveys the message and methods of much (most!?) modern evangelism it becomes readily apparent that what is being said or done is not in congruence with the doctrine of Scripture. To say the least, “it is rare today to hear proclaimed the diagnosis of our predicament which Luther—and Scripture—put forward: that man is hopeless and helpless in sin, fast bound in Satan’s slavery, at enmity with God, blind and dead to the things of the Spirit.”³¹ As a consequence, “how rarely do we hear faith spoken of as Scripture depicts it—as it is expressed in the cry of self-committal with which the contrite heart, humbled to see its

need, and made conscious of its own utter helplessness even to trust, casts itself in the God-given confidence of self-despair upon the mercy of Christ Jesus.”³² Either modern evangelicals have abandoned the Scriptural doctrine, or they are involved in practices which contradict it. Let’s examine this further.

The Message of Modern Evangelism

Differences between much of today’s preaching and that of Jesus are not petty: they are enormous. The chief errors are not in emphasis or approach but in the heart of the Gospel message.³³

Modern evangelism is conspicuous by its distilling of the gospel into “Four Laws” or the “ABC’s of New Life” or “Steps to Peace with God,” etc. There is no doubt that there are central and elementary principles of the gospel: sin, redemption by the blood of Christ, and the demand for faith and repentance. Yet, as Murray rightly notes, two facts must be kept in mind:³⁴ 1) The Scripture pattern will not support the conclusion that the central message of the gospel is the exclusive content of the message of evangelism, and; 2) the central message itself cannot properly be presented or understood except as it is presented in the context of the whole counsel of God.

In other words, the biblical message of evangelism is the whole counsel of

God. The Spirit uses the truth of God to change lives, whether it be to bring a sinner to conversion or to build up and instruct the saint. When God is preached, the Spirit can use that truth to convict men of their smallness and sin, and of the greatness and holiness of God. When Christ is uplifted, men are pointed to the Saviour and Lord. When sin is preached, men are shown their state before a holy God, their utter helplessness and hopelessness. When wrath, condemnation, and hell are preached, men are shown their destiny outside of Christ. When the cross is declared, its saving efficacy is made known. When heaven is proclaimed, the hope of those in Christ is set forth.

What has been the result of our distillation of the gospel into a few "key points," of our failure to preach the whole counsel of God? In a nutshell, the emphasis of evangelism has been perverted (however unintentionally): it has become man-centered rather than God-centered. Let's analyze this further by a series of questions.³⁵

First, where is the preaching today on the character of God? How is He exalted and brought honor? Does the sinner know who God is, this One with whom he has to do, this One whom he has offended, and who threatens him with destruction? Does he know the One who is able to save him?

Much of modern preaching is anaemic, with the life-blood of God's nature absent from the message. Evangelists centre their message upon man. Man has sinned and missed a great blessing. If man wants to retrieve his immense loss he must act thus and so. But the Gospel of Christ is very different. It begins with God and His glory. It tells men that they have offended a holy God, who will be no means pass by sin. It reminds sinners that the only hope of salvation is to be found in the grace and power of this same God. Christ's gospel sends men to beg pardon of the Holy One.³⁶

Is it not a great mistake to assume that sinners know who God is? The whole gospel message depends upon the character of God. "If you rush into four easy steps to Heaven with a man who has a defective view of God, you will deceive him and yourself. You may lead him to pray after you, and you will be praying to the God of glorious holiness. But when he repeats 'God' in his prayer, he will be praying to another God, or at best to his 'unknown God.'"³⁷

Second, where is the preaching of the law of God? In saying this, we are also saying, where is the preaching of the sinfulness and depravity of man? For, "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20). We give lip service to the concept of sin, but very rarely are

God's holy standards clearly set forth, so that man may be shown to be a sinner, ungodly, unrighteous, helpless, under wrath and condemnation, and indeed, an enemy of God (Rom. 5:6-10). We want to quickly get to the cross of Christ, but a man will not flee to a Saviour unless and until he sees himself for what he is—an ungodly person who deserves the condemnation of God, a person who can do absolutely nothing to save himself. It is only when a man has been wounded by the law of God that the balm of the gospel can have its effect.³⁸ It is the sharp needle of the law that makes way for the scarlet thread of the gospel.³⁹

Third, where is the preaching of repentance toward God? Where is the emphasis on the fact that Christ saves from sin, not in sin? That salvation means separation from this present evil age? We tell people to “accept Jesus as your personal Saviour” (a phrase not found in Scripture); we speak of “faith,” but we do not speak of repentance. Yet, as we saw above, there is no true faith which is not a repentant faith. We emphasize an “abundant life,” “happiness,” “fulfillment,” “peace.” We do not emphasize a break with sin and repentance toward God.

Fourth, where is the preaching of hell? Many who call themselves evangelical have abandoned the historic Christian doctrine of the eternal

punishment of sinners in hell.⁴⁰ Most who say they believe it do not preach it. When is the last time you heard a sermon anything like Jonathan Edwards' “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (which God used in the conversion of many!)? And even when we speak of hell, we water it down to mean only “eternal separation from God” rather than the biblical picture of hell being the presence of God in eternal wrath and torment.⁴¹

The message of evangelism is woefully lacking today. We must get back to preaching the whole counsel of God, and do away with our simplistic, man-centered message, as well as the idea that we have not really preached “evangelistically” unless we give a pat formula of content. We must return to a God-centered gospel.⁴²

The Methods of Modern Evangelism

When we speak of methods of evangelism, we do not mean the variety of situations in which the gospel may be presented (e.g., one-to-one, large group, small group, to specific target audiences, etc.), but the manner in which the message is shared, the elements involved in the presentation, and so forth. We have already touched on the weaknesses/dangers of much modern evangelism as it relates to the content of the gospel message. To methods we now turn.

Foundational Principles

Before we evaluate these methods, it is good to remind ourselves of some foundational principles of evangelism. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has identified some of these for us:

1. The supreme object of this work is to glorify God... The first object of preaching the gospel is not to save souls; it is to glorify God. Nothing else, however good in itself, or however noble, must be allowed to usurp that first place.
2. The only power that can really do this work is that of the Holy Spirit.
3. The one and only medium through which the Holy Spirit works is the Word of God... The medium which is used by the Holy Spirit is the truth.
4. The true urge to evangelization must come from apprehending these principles and, therefore, of a zeal for the honour and glory of God, and a love for the souls of men.
5. There is a constant danger of error, and of heresy, even amongst the most sincere, and also the danger of a false zeal and the employment of unscriptural methods.⁴³

Historical Perspective

In addition, we must remember that our theology determines our methods. A brief look at history can aid us in our perspective. Charles Finney must get the credit for introducing the “modern” way of doing evangelism. We can compare the “modern” type of evangelism with the more “traditional” evangelism by comparing the theology and approaches of Finney and George Whitefield.⁴⁴

For Finney, the sinner has natural ability to turn whole-heartedly to God once he is convinced that that is the right, proper, and needful things to do. Accordingly, the whole work of the Spirit in conversion involves moral persuasion, i.e., making vivid to our minds the reasons for laying down our rebel arms and surrendering to God.

Since everyone, if he will rouse up his “dormant moral powers,” can at any time yield to God and become a Christian, it is the evangelist’s duty always to preach for immediate decision and commitment.

Whitefield’s theology of evangelism is different from Finney. For Whitefield, the sinner is unable to turn to God, being totally depraved. No one seeks for God. Accordingly, the work of the Spirit involves, not only conviction, but effectually calling the dead sinner to new life. Conversion is a gracious sovereign work of divine power.

In the manner and time of conversion God is sovereign. It is never man, but always God, who determines when an elect sinner shall believe. It is the duty of the evangelist to preach the gospel, faith issuing from the preached Word (Rom. 10:17), not from a “call to decision.”

Methods of Finney and Whitefield

Finney says of a typical mission sermon, “I tried to shut them up to present faith and repentance, as the thing which God required of them... present and instant acceptance of Christ.” For Finney evangelistic preaching was a battle of wills between himself and his hearers, in which the task was to bring them to the breaking-point. Evangelism in the church involves a “campaign” of meetings, or at least becomes an activity which is additional and auxiliary to the regular functioning of the local congregation.

In contrast Whitefield insisted on the preaching of four truths: the duty of receiving Jesus Christ as Saviour and Master; the danger of settling in religion for anything less; the impossibility of coming to Christ without renewing grace; and the necessity of seeking that grace from Christ’s own hand. The way to the will is through the mind. Truth is proclaimed and used by the Spirit to

effect the will and affections drawing men to Christ.

Evangelism in the church is a normal part of preaching and the life of the church. Indeed, all sermons are “gospel” sermons. Evangelism is conceived of primarily as an enterprise, often long-term, of faithfulness in delivering the gospel message, and only secondarily as a special gathering solely for “witness.” Here is where modern evangelicals often fail to think through the issues. For if Finney’s doctrine of the natural state of sinful man is right, then his evangelistic methods must be judged right also, for, as he often insisted, the ‘new measures’ were means well adapted to the end in view... But if his view of man is wrong, then his methods must be called into question—which is an issue of importance at the present time: for it is Finney’s methods, modified and adapted, that characterise a great deal of evangelism today. If Finney’s doctrine is rejected, such methods are inappropriate to a degree, and actually detrimental to the real work of evangelism.⁴⁵

Flowing from this historical perspective, we see that the predominant modern methods which must be called into question are associated with how a sinner is instructed to “close with Christ” at the end of an evangelistic presentation.

“Decisional Regeneration”

The first “method” of modern evangelism which must be questioned is that of “calling for a decision.” The sinner, after being told the “elements” of salvation, is instructed that he must initiate the work of conversion-regeneration by becoming willing, and God will complete it; he must do what he can and God will do the rest. Once he has made a firm “decision for Christ,” he is told (on the basis of such texts as John 1:12) that the Divine work has also been accomplished.⁴⁶

As Adams notes,⁴⁷ “The great theological difference between modern evangelism and biblical evangelism hinges on this basic question whether true religion is the work of God or of man. At best, the doctrine of ‘Decisional Regeneration’ attributes the new birth partly to man and partly to God.”⁴⁸ “The ultimate defect and error... is that it excludes the Holy Spirit from the real decision, and asserts that man is able to convert himself.”⁴⁹

Modern evangelistic methods emphasize the “decision.”⁵⁰ But by doing so a pattern of conversion is constructed which is sub-scriptural and which the natural man can attain to. When repentance and faith are depicted as being possible to the unrenewed man it “opens the way to an experience in which the self-will of the sinner and not

the power of God may be the main feature.”⁵¹

We must see the seriousness of the dangers of this modern type of evangelism. As Packer rightly observed regarding Finney’s method:

Believing that it is in everyone’s power to accept Christ at any moment, Finney equated the immediate response that the gospel requires of all with instant conversion on the part of all. But by making this equation he made it impossible to avoid doing damage to some souls. If one tells people that they are under obligation to receive Christ on the spot, and calls in God’s name for instant decision, some who are spiritually unprepared will “pray a prayer,” accept directions, “go through the motions,” and go away thinking they have received Christ, when in reality they have not done so because they were not yet able to do so. So a crop of false conversions results from these tactics in the nature of the case.⁵²

The “Altar Call”

One of the staples of modern evangelism is the “altar call,” the call for public response on the part of those professing Christ at the end of an

evangelistic service. It is a surprise for most to learn that the “invitation” as it is given today has no precedent in Scripture or in church history prior to Finney.⁵³ We have seen Finney’s doctrine that man has natural ability to believe and repent, and that conversion is the direct result of moral persuasion by the appropriate use of means. He also held that true converts could be identified immediately.⁵⁴

But the “altar call” suffers from the same dangers as noted above. In the words of Lloyd-Jones,

The ‘appeal,’ or ‘altar call,’ to use the American term, is responsible for confusing conversion with a decision to come forward. Because unregenerate people, for all manner of reasons, are capable of responding to the call to the front, an impression of spiritual results far beyond the reality is being created. At the same time, the virtual identification of saving faith with the decision to walk forward is bound, in many cases, to confuse individuals as to their real spiritual condition. It is wrong theology—God has given to every man the ability to believe—leading to a wrong practice. Certainly the evangelist is to appeal for faith

and repentance, but the time when the truth is made effective unto salvation belongs to God alone.⁵⁵

The combination of a faulty, man-centered message and the equation of “response” with regeneration creates many problems. The most serious error is the many spurious conversions which result. The evangelist must exercise care lest by a mere appeal to self-interest he induces a ‘decision’ which, far from being saving, is perfectly consistent with a person remaining in an unregenerate condition. A presentation of the gospel chiefly in terms of its ability to fulfill man’s need of happiness and other blessings, and which fails to show that man’s wrong relationship to God is much worse than everything else in his condition, may well receive a considerable though temporary success (cd. Luke 8:13-14). A salvation conceived not as something primarily that brings us to God but as something that gives us something requires no real conviction of sin in order to its acceptance.⁵⁶

The use of an “altar call” is also denial in practice of the biblical teaching on the question of, ‘from where comes faith?’ Romans 10:17 informs us that “faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word concerning Christ” (or as the NEB puts it, “faith is awakened by the message,

and the message that awakens it comes through the word of Christ"). The Holy Spirit uses the preached word to produce faith in the sinner. It is not produced by the invitational "extra" which is added at the end of the message (see, e.g., Acts 10:44ff.; 13:48; 16:14). In modern evangelism the preacher/evangelist "preaches the Word of God, and then adds something: a human appeal to the sinner to exercise his freedom by deciding for Christ. This appeal is added to the sermon because the [speaker] believes that the Word itself does not have the inherent right and power to bring the sinner to a surrender to God unless his freedom grants prior assent."⁵⁷ There is no need for the "added extra" at the end. Great preachers such as William Perkins, Richard Baxter, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Wesley, Charles Spurgeon, and Martyn Lloyd-Jones did not use the modern public invitation system. And we do not need it either.⁵⁸ The preaching and the call for decision should not be separated. The preaching is the call for decision; the appeal is implicit throughout.

False Assurance

As part of the doctrine of "decisional regeneration" comes the giving of false assurance of salvation to many. Preachers, evangelists, sharers, and counselors assure an individual that his

salvation is certain because he has prayed the prescribed prayer and answered "yes" to all the right questions. He is told that his salvation is secure because God will not lie and, since he has made a decision, God has fulfilled His promise to "come into his life and forgive his sins." To doubt is to bring the veracity of God into question.

But on the basis of this counseling "a man may make a profession without every having his confidence in his own ability shattered; he has been told absolutely nothing of his need of a change of nature which is not within his own power, and consequently, if he does not experience such a radical change, he is not dismayed."⁵⁹ People leave the evangelistic encounter with assurance of salvation, but often without regeneration having taken place, still in an unconverted state. One has only to be involved in the follow-up of such professors to realize how prevalent this situation is. "Results" and "statistics" are emphasized at the expense of regeneration.

However, as noted above, a decision to "believe" without evidence of a changed heart is no basis for thinking that anyone has become a Christian. Furthermore, the basis of salvation, the death of Christ, is not to be made the exclusive basis of the believer's assurance. For "the salvation of the

Christian includes Christ's work in the believer and that work provides evidence of salvation which is distinct from what Christ has done for the believer. This evidence does not mean that sanctification is to be seen as the foundation of assurance but the Spirit uses the evidence of experience to strengthen and confirm assurance" (I John 2:3; 3:14, etc.).⁶⁰

A person may indeed be assured of possessing a saving relationship with God. But that assurance must have a Scriptural foundation. As we saw earlier, this involves the Word of God, the ministries of the Holy Spirit, and the changed life of the believer.

Result: The Need for Something "More"

The theology of "decisional regeneration" leads to another problem. As noted above, many "converts" of modern evangelicalism are often as worldly after their "decisions" as before. As a result, rather than questioning their methods and their theology, evangelicals have introduced the concept of "categories" of Christians: for example, those who have taken the gift of eternal life without turning from sin vs. those who have done both; those who have allowed Jesus to be their Saviour but not as yet their Lord; etc. We end up with a "class" of Christians who have not broken with sin, who give no evidence

of new life, yet are told that they are secure and on the way to heaven.

"Trying to patch up a faulty evangelism, the church has adopted a faulty follow-up."⁶¹

In other words, the teaching of "decisional regeneration" and its attendants "depreciates the biblical doctrine of regeneration/conversion by implying that the change in the regenerated sinner may amount to little or nothing. It then often goes on to say that the important change which affects a man's character and conduct is the second step which makes him a 'spiritual Christian.'"⁶² However, Scripture clearly teaches that it is regeneration that makes the decisive change (2 Cor. 5:17).⁶³

There are many other dangers to such teaching, most of which have been mentioned before:⁶⁴ 1) There is a separation of the blessings of the New Covenant, which blessings (forgiveness of sins and a changed heart) are inseparable (see Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26ff.). 2) There is the failure to distinguish between saving faith and spurious faith. 3) There is often a failure to emphasize repentance in the Christian life. 4) There is the danger of giving false assurance. 5) It promotes a low view of sin. 6) And there is the danger of a low view of Christ and the cross.

Other Improper Methods

The modern methods of evangelism noted above constitute major areas which need to be reconsidered in light of biblical theology. However, there are other methods which also must be mentioned, although space prohibits any detailed evaluation.

For example, what James Stewart calls "Hollywood Evangelism"⁶⁵ is all too prevalent; preaching a popular Jesus, dealing in Madison Avenue techniques and depending on the psychology of the world rather than trusting the Spirit,⁶⁶ an emphasis on glamour and entertainment rather than on the Word of God, a perversion of the cross of Christ.⁶⁷

And we have changed the nature of evangelism itself. From the mission of the Body of Christ which is centered in the local church, we have often divorced it from the church and made it the domain of parachurch groups and individual men holding their own "crusades." Mass evangelism has for many replaced the normal way of life evangelism characteristic of the New Testament, whereby individual Christians "gossip" the good news to those around them in home and workplace; it has also all too often replaced the preaching of the church itself.⁶⁸ And even those who are involved in personal evangelism believe (and are told that) they have to be

"trained" in a certain technique in order to be effective.⁶⁹

We have also changed the theology of revival. The biblical understanding of revival is that of a work of God's sovereign grace through His Spirit, awakening the spiritually dead to living faith in Christ and renewing the inner life of believers. It is essentially a corporate phenomena, the extension to many, at the same time, of that same divine power which is present in the conversion of every individual.⁷⁰ While God uses means (e.g., stirring up His people to pray; 2 Chron. 7:14), the bringing and timing of revival is of God. Finney was influential in changing this understanding to a more man-centered outlook (and his theological descendants have taken it even further). He spoke of the "law of revival," namely that the Church's praying, repenting, and seeking God guarantees an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in revival blessing, comparing it to the way God guarantees the farmer's crop if proper sowing and care are undertaken.⁷¹ And we thus have "revival meetings" for a week or two each year, as if these automatically bring forth spiritual renewal.

Summary

Modern methods of evangelism are very often contrary to, or at best, incongruent with, Scriptural truth. They have been developed with the

assumption that God has already done what He can to save man, and is now idly standing by waiting to see what sinners will decide to do with Jesus and His salvation. It is as if the Spirit were not in the world to convict of sin, reveal Christ, and regenerate sinners. They must exercise the power of their natural wills.⁷²

The results have too often been spurious conversions and false assurance given to the unconverted. This is not to say that genuine conversions have not also resulted (for God “graciously blesses truth even when error sits alongside it”).⁷³ But the dangers of the new methods go beyond any benefits (for biblically the true converts would have been converted with the proper methods).

A few genuine decisions may occur among the many... There is, however, a very grave harm done to any who are thus superficially affected, and this harm might sometimes outweigh the good that is done. In reply to this it is argued that nothing can outweigh the value of one soul that is saved; yet when the harm of a false decision is analyzed, it will be seen that the after-state of bewilderment and discouragement which results in an attitude that is almost unapproachable and hopeless, has its unmeasured results as well.⁷⁴

We must employ true, biblical methods in our evangelism, methods

which are true to the biblical message. These will be methods which demonstrate a dependence on God in our preaching, on the only One who can save a sinner.⁷⁵ They will be methods which do not urge or coax a person to respond who has not first given evidence of a divinely-wrought sense of need, methods which do not give assurance to a sinner who has not an afflicted conscience.⁷⁶ And we will give proper invitations, not inviting men to come to an altar, but to Christ.⁷⁷

The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation.” All too often modern evangelicals have turned it into “the power of man unto decision.” We must recover the message of evangelism, and understand that true evangelism “preaches the whole counsel of God with explanation and application to sinners,”⁷⁸ which includes preaching on the character of God, the depravity and inability of man, the propitiatory atonement of Christ. And we must trust God by His Spirit to use the message preached to give them new life, to convert them. Sinners must see that their only hope is to call on God to do for them what they cannot do for themselves.

There must be no divorce between biblical theology and the message we give, and the methods we use (cf. I Cor. 2:1-5). We must realize that much of the modern approach to evangelism,

with its techniques and methods, is unnecessary if we really believe in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and His application of God's message, and then we must change our methods.⁷⁹

Dr. J.I. Packer's small book *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*⁸⁰ (written over 30 years ago!), outlined the truth presented in this article. In it, he included some very helpful questions to ask ourselves in bringing evangelistic methods into line with Scripture. These questions are in need of being asked anew to us today. Starting from the key principle that there is only one method of evangelism—the faithful explanation and application of the gospel message—the test for any proposed strategy, or technique, or style of evangelistic action must be this: will it in fact serve the word?⁸¹ “Is it calculated to be a means of explaining the gospel truly and fully and applying it deeply and exactly? To the extent to which it is so calculated, it is lawful and right; to the extent to which it tends to overlay and obscure the realities of the message, and to blunt the edge of their application, it is ungodly and wrong.”⁸²

In working this out, Packer asked the following of any evangelistic plans and practices:⁸²

Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to impress on people

that the gospel is a word from God?

Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to promote, or impede, the work of the word in men's minds?⁸⁴

Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to convey to people the doctrine of the gospel, and not just part of it, but the whole of it?

Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to convey to people the application of the gospel, and not just part of it, but the whole of it?

Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to convey gospel truth in a manner that is appropriately serious?⁸⁵

In another place, Packer asks other penetrating questions which can help us:⁸⁶

1. Do I believe the historic biblical question of ruin, redemption, and regeneration?
2. Do I hold to the vital necessity of conversion?
3. Am I as real as I should be in choosing means (means fitting correct theology) to the end that I desire, and am charged to seek, namely, the conversion of souls?

4. Am I to be primarily and almost exclusively concerned with evangelistic campaigns and with the attempt to make them more efficient by new methods and techniques? Or should we not concentrate more, as the church has done throughout the centuries, upon praying for, and laying the basis of Christian instruction for, revival as it is described in the Bible?

The work of evangelism is a great and glorious work. The Church corporately and Christians individually have the wonderful privilege and the awe-inspiring responsibility of being involved in this mission. May our message be the whole counsel of God, and may our methods be consistent with the message.

Notes

¹ For a good discussion of the nature of true revival as a sovereign outpouring of the Spirit of God see David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Revival* (Crossway, 1987); see also the writing of Jonathan Edwards, the theologian of revival - *Works* 1:344-364, 365-430, 532-619, 234-343; 2:257-277.

² In his forward to E. Elliot, *No Graven Image* (Crossway, 1982), p.vii.

³ For example: Walter Chantry, *Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?* (Banner of Truth, 1972); James Adams, *Decisional Regeneration* (Sword & Trowel, 1973); R.B. Kuiper, *God-Centered Evangelism* (Banner of Truth, 1966); James A. Stewart, *Evangelism* (Revival Literature, 1955); J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (IVP, 1971).

⁴ *What's Wrong with Preaching Today?* (Banner of Truth, 1970), pp. 16, 17.

⁵ "We simply cannot understand how we sinned in Adam; the Bible does not tell us. Nor can we understand how the guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to us; the Bible does not answer this question either. What the Bible does tell us is that we sinned in Adam, and that the guilt of Adam's first sin is imputed to us; further than that we should not go. Sin remains a mystery, not only in its

commission but also in its transmission." - A.A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Eerdmans, 1986), p. 157.

⁶ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Eerdmans, 1941), p. 244.

⁷ This has been spoken of as the "total depravity" of man and means that the inherent corruption extends to every part of every person. For a clear brief discussion see A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Banner of Truth, 1972), pp. 328-9. Note the following concise comment by Donald Bloesch [*Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (Harper and Row, 1978), I:90]: "In the perspective of biblical faith total depravity can be thought of as having four meanings, all of which are valid. First, it refers to the corruption at the very center of man's being, the heart, but this does not mean that man's humanity has ceased to exist. Second, it signifies the infection in every part of man's being, though this is not to infer that this infection is evenly distributed or that nothing good remains in man. Third, it denotes the total inability of sinful man to please God or come to Him unless moved by grace, though this does not imply that man is not free in other areas of life. Fourth, it includes the idea of the universal corruption of the human race, despite the fact that some people and cultures manifest this corruption much less than others."

⁸. *Christianity Today*, vol. 13, no. 17 (May 23, 1969), p. 13.

⁹. See Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Victor Books, 1986), pp. 218-219.

¹⁰. Hodge, *Outlines*, p. 339. Pages 325-347 contain a succinct discussion of these concepts.

¹¹. *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* (Banner of Truth, 1964), p. 128.

¹². See Martin Luther's masterwork, *Thee Bondage of the Will* (Revell, 1957). For Luther, the doctrine of man's spiritual inability was the jugular vein of Christianity, the essential issue (see page 319); for him, as Packer says in the introduction, "the doctrine of the bondage of the will in particular was the corner-stone of the gospel and the very foundation of faith" (p. 43). For it is only a man who is humbled by his sinfulness and inability who will cry out to God and flee to Christ, the Saviour.

¹³. Biblically, election is that phase of God's eternal purpose whereby He certainly and eternally determines by means of unconditional and loving choice who will believe and be saved. It is not mere purpose to give salvation to those who may believe, but rather it determines who will believe. Cf. Matt. 22:14; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:33; Eph. 1:4; 2 Thes. 2:13; et.al.

Election is not based on anything in man, whether foreseen works or foreseen faith. Neither of these has a basis in Scripture.

For a good discussion of the doctrine of election, see Paul Jewett, *Election and Predestination* (Eerdmans, 1985). See especially his summary of the biblical doctrine of election on pages 13-14.

¹⁴. Some reject the biblical concept of effectual calling. They teach that God gives grace to all men to accept or reject the gospel; the ultimate determination in salvation is not God's grace, but man's free choice. Thiessen (*Lectures in Systematic Theology*, p. 155, original edition) defines this prevenient grace thusly: "God... restores to the sinner the ability to make a favorable response to God. In other words... God in His grace makes it possible for men to be saved." Normally such passages as John 1:9; Titus 2:14; and Romans 2:4 are used to support this notion. Most of the support, however, comes from the belief that effectual calling/grace destroys the responsibility of man, and that a command to believe assumes the ability to do so. Since man is depraved and unable to respond, God must take the action. This he does for all by granting prevenient grace.

In response we note that this "prevenient grace" is nowhere taught in Scripture. In addition, a study of the word "call" will clearly show that those effectually called respond. Romans 8:30 teaches that all who are called are

justified and glorified. Unless we opt for universal salvation, we must recognize that there is a calling which goes out to some, not others, and is effectual, a calling which comes from God as its source.

¹⁵ Canons of Dort, II.5; cf. also III-IV.8.

¹⁶ "Effectual calling is the efficacious summons on the part of God the Father, in accordance with and in pursuance of His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus, addressed to sinners dead in trespasses and sins, a call that ushers them into fellowship with Christ and into the possession of the salvation of which He is the embodiment; a call immutable in its character by reason of the purpose from which it proceeds and the bond it effects" [John Murray, *Collected Writings*, (Banner of Truth, 1977) 2:165].

"The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ (John 6:63), by working faith in us (Eph. 2:8), and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling (I Cor. 1:9). Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit (2 Tim. 1:8-9), whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery (Acts 2:37), enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ (Acts 26:18), and renewing our wills (Ezek. 11:19), he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel (John 6:44)" [*Westminster*

Shorter Catechism, questions 30 and 31].

¹⁷ See the excellent discussion of the relationship between the divine and human in D.A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* (John Knox Press, 1981), pp. 163-198.

¹⁸ "Historical and Theological Introduction" to Luther's *Bondage of the Will*, op.cit., pp. 58-59.

¹⁹ "The only thing of my very own which I can contribute to my own salvation is the sin from which I need to be redeemed" (William Temple, *Nature, Man, and God*, p. 401).

²⁰ See Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Baker, 1985), pp. 944ff.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 946.

²² "How much (or, how little) knowledge of gospel facts and truths does one need to come to a genuine conversion? The answer has to be given in functional terms: enough to make one certain, through the Spirit's convincing and convicting action, that one needs a new life that is right with God, and that the only way to have such a life is to trust oneself absolutely to the mercy and direction of Jesus Christ as living personal Saviour and Lord" (Packer, "The Means of Conversion," *Crux XXV.4* (December 1989): 19).

²³ For a good discussion of repentance see William Chamberlain, *The Meaning of Repentance* (Westminster, 1943),

and Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (Banner of Truth, 1987).

²⁴ For an excellent statement on the relationship between regeneration (new birth) and conversion (repentance and faith) see Samuel Hopkins, "Regeneration and Conversion," in *Introduction to Puritan Theology* (ed. Edward Hindson [Baker, 1976]), pp. 172-195.

²⁵ See A. Alexander, "A Treatise in Which the Difference Between a Living and a Dead Faith is Explained, 1791," *The Banner of Truth* 335-336 (August/September 1991):39-54.

²⁶ J.I. Packer, *I Want to be a Christian* (Tyndale, 1987), p. 121.

²⁷ What is meant by this witness of the Spirit is not "an impression on the imagination, by some immediate communication from the Spirit, that your sins are forgiven, and that you are a child of God." Rather, it is "an influence of the Spirit of God, exciting such a love for God and Jesus Christ, such clear views of their character, as that the subject of it knows from experience and from Scripture, that he is a child of God and an heir of salvation." The former is often a type of enthusiasm. From Iain Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Banner of Truth, 1987), p. 490.

²⁸ See Robert Law's fine treatment of this theme in his commentary on I John, *The Tests of Life* (Baker reprint, 1968).

²⁹ The contribution of Jonathan Edwards here is helpful and illuminating. Murray (*Ibid.*, pp. 264) ably summarizes some of his thoughts as found in *The Religious Affections* (*Works* 1:234-343):

"Edwards' conviction was that the NT teaches no one experience as being the permanent source of the believer's assurance. One 'witness of the Spirit' is not enough any more than one 'experience' at the supposed time of conversion is enough. For assurance is never to be enjoyed on the basis of a past experience. There is need of the present and continuing work of the Holy Spirit. And this inward work of the Spirit, giving assurance, is not an alternative to the assurance obtained through resting in Christ, or through one 'immediate witness,' rather it is the basis of all true spiritual comfort—a comfort which may exist in many varying degrees of strength. Further, Edwards insists, from Scripture, that action on the part of the believer is involved in order to assurance. Walking in obedience to God and the comfort of the Holy Spirit belong together (Acts 9:31) and, therefore, such assurance as is maintained permanently, without any regard or care for holiness of life, is false assurance.

The 'witness' of the Spirit is never to be separated from the Word of God nor from the evidence of grace in the heart and life."

³⁰ Adapted from A.A. Hodge, *Outlines*, p. 479. See also Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, pp. 250-260.

³¹ Packer, introduction to Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, op.cit., p. 60.

³² Ibid.

³³ Chantry, *Today's Gospel*, p. 90.

³⁴ John Murray, *Collected Writings* (Banner of Truth, 1976): 1:125.

³⁵ I am indebted to Chantry for the general structure of these. His discussion of the message of Jesus in the incident of the rich young ruler is insightful in demonstrating the "counsel of God" in evangelism.

³⁶ Chantry, p. 25.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 30.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 43.

³⁹ Samuel Bolton, quoted in Ibid., p. 43.

⁴⁰ For example, see Clark Pinnock, "Fire, Then Nothing," *Christianity Today* (20 March 1987): 40-41.

⁴¹ For an excellent discussion of the nature of hell, one which does not water down the teaching, see John Gerstner, *Jonathan Edwards on Heaven and Hell* (Baker, 1980), pp. 49-93.

⁴² There is nothing wrong in employing a "tool" to guide us in, for example, one-to-one evangelism. But experience shows that the "tool," rather than being

a guide in unfolding the counsel of God with proper content and emphasis, usually becomes the message itself. And most such "tools" suffer from the problem of being man-centered.

⁴³ *Knowing the Times* (Banner of Truth, 1989), pp. 5-6.

⁴⁴ Adapted from chapter eighteen of J.I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness* (Crossway, 1990).

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 294.

⁴⁶ Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Banner of Truth, 1966), p. 104.

⁴⁷ See James Adams, *Decisional Regeneration* (Sword and Trowel, 1973).

⁴⁸ See the Westminster Confession X.1-2 for a concise statement of this relationship.

⁴⁹ *Decisional Regeneration*, pp. 26-27.

⁵⁰ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans* (Banner of Truth, 1987), p. 19.

⁵¹ Iain Murray, *Forgotten Spurgeon*, p. 104.

⁵² *Quest*, pp. 299-300.

⁵³ See Erroll Hulse, *The Great Invitation* (Hertfordshire, England: Evangelical Press, 1986).

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 96.

⁵⁵ I. Murray, *Lloyd-Jones*, 2:339.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 2:327.

⁵⁷ James Daane, *The Freedom of God* (Eerdmans, 1973), p. 17. He goes on to add: "In the light of this, it follows that

the more [a church is dominated by this type of theology], the more that church will resort to finding ways and means of influencing sinners, and the less faith it will have in its public preaching services and ministry of prayer. In many evangelical church services more time and greater zeal is devoted to the post-sermon appeal to unbelievers than to prayer to God.

“The degree of imposition and manipulation of the sinner’s freedom may at times be minimal, but this is determined more by the personal preferences of the preacher than by theological considerations” (pp. 17-18).

⁵⁸ Lloyd-Jones gives an excellent discussion of this issue, including reasons for not using an altar call, in *Preaching and Preachers* (Zondervan, 1971), chapter 14. See also Hulse, *The Great Invitation*.

⁵⁹ Murray, *Forgotten Spurgeon*, p. 105.

⁶⁰ I. Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith* (Banner of Truth, 1990), 2:726. For a concise statement of the biblical doctrine of assurance, see the *Westminster Confession* 18.1-4.

⁶¹ Chantry, p. 54. Regarding this issue of “categories” of Christians, J.C. Ryle noted (*Holiness*, Revell, n.d., p. xv.): “The Word of God always speaks of two great divisions of mankind and two only. It speaks of the living and the dead in sin—the believer and the

unbeliever—the converted and the unconverted—the travellers in the narrow way and the travellers in the broad—the wise and the foolish—the children of God and the children of the devil. Within each of these two great classes there are, doubtless, various measures of sin and of grace; but it is only the difference between the higher and lower end of an inclined plane.

Between these two great classes there is an enormous gulf; they are as distinct as life and death, light and darkness, heaven and hell. But of a division into three classes the Word of God says nothing at all!”

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶³ “Many talk now-a-days about ‘Consecration’ who seem to be ignorant of the ‘first principles of the oracles of God’ about ‘Conversion’” (Ryle, *Holiness*, 5th ed. 1900, p. viii).

⁶⁴ Adapted from Ernest Reisinger, *The Carnal Christian* (Banner of Truth, n.d.).

⁶⁵ Stewart, *Evangelism*, pp. 7-21.

⁶⁶ In much evangelism today “there is a tendency to employ the methods of modern business, high-pressure advertising, public opinion polls, mass suggestion, and success stories to swing the masses into the church [or at least to make them come forward!]. The danger of this technique lies in the subtle [or not so subtle] emphasis from the objective truth of the Christian Gospel

to its pragmatic value to society. The result... is to transform the Gospel challenge of 'repent and believe' into the cynical technique of 'How to Win Friends and Influence People'." [quoted in Stewart, p. 22].

⁶⁷ "All unannounced and mostly undetected there has come in modern times a new cross into popular evangelical circles. It is like the old cross, but different: the likeness is superficial; the differences, fundamental.

"From this new cross has sprung a new philosophy of the Christian life, and from that new philosophy has come a new evangelical technique—a new type of meeting and a new kind of preaching. This new evangelism employs the same language as the old, but its content is not the same and its emphasis not as before.

"The old cross would have no truck with the world. For Adam's proud flesh it meant the end of the journey. It carried into effect the sentence imposed by the law of Sinai. The new cross is not opposed to the human race... It lets Adam live without interference. His life motivation is unchanged; he still lives for his own pleasure...

"The new cross encourages a new and entirely different evangelistic approach. The evangelist... preaches not contrasts but similarities. He seeks to key into public interest by showing that

Christianity makes no unpleasant demands; rather, it offers the same thing the world does, only on a higher level. Whatever the sin-mad world happens to be clamoring after at the moment is cleverly shown to be the very thing the gospel offers, only the religious product is better.

"The new cross does not slay the sinner, it redirects him... It saves his self-respect. To the self-assertive it says, 'Come and assert yourself for Christ.' To the egotist it says, 'Come and do your boasting in the Lord.' To the thrillseeker it says, 'Come and enjoy the thrill of Christian fellowship.' The Christian message is slanted in the direction of the current vogue in order to make it acceptable to the public.

"The philosophy back of this kind of thing may be sincere but its sincerity does not save it from being false. It is false because it is blind. It misses completely the whole meaning of the cross...

"That evangelism which draws friendly parallels between the ways of God and the ways of men is false to the Bible and cruel to the souls of its hearers. The faith of Christ does not parallel the world, it intersects it. In coming to Christ we do not bring our old life up onto a higher plane; we leave it at the cross. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die.

"We who preach the gospel must not think of ourselves as public relations agents sent to establish goodwill between Christ and the world. We must not imagine ourselves commissioned to make Christ acceptable to big business, the press, the world of sports or modern education. We are not diplomats but prophets, and our message is not a compromise but an ultimatum."

- A.W. Tozer, *Man: The Dwelling Place of God* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1966), pp. 42-44.

⁶⁸ There is nothing wrong with mass evangelism (there is clear instance of it in the NT!), and it should be encouraged. But its message and methods must be biblical. And any groups or associations conducting it should not depreciate or replace the local church: the church is the God-ordained agent of evangelism (Matt. 28:19; Acts 13:1-4).

⁶⁹ "The idea of training people to do evangelism is new and modern" (I. Murray, *Lloyd-Jones*, 2:579). True Christian testimony is spontaneous; there is something within which urges and compels.

⁷⁰ Packer, *Quest*, p. 36; I. Murray, *Lloyd-Jones*, 1:202ff. See also the books cited in endnote 1.

⁷¹ See his *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (Cambridge, MA, 1960).

⁷² Chantry, p. 82.

⁷³ Packer, *Quest*, p. 300.

⁷⁴ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *True Evangelism* (Zondervan, 1919, 1967), p. 75. See also the comments by Robert L. Dabney, *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological* (London, 1967), Vol. 2, p. 13; and Packer, *Quest*, pp. 163-4.

⁷⁵ See Chantry, chapter 6.

⁷⁶ Chafer, p. 76. See the masterful and insightful work by Robert Bolton, *A Treatise on Comforting Afflicted Consciences* (reprinted from the 17th century edition by Soli Deo Gloria, Ligonier, PA, 1991). He shows us how to avoid giving false assurance as well as how to give proper and true assurance to those professing Christ.

⁷⁷ See the examples of this in the sermons of Paul and Peter, and in the sermons and writings of great preachers throughout church history who held to the "doctrines of grace" and fervently preached Christ, men like George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, John Owen, Charles Spurgeon, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and the Puritans. See, for example, I. Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, pp. 100-102; Hulse, *The Great Invitation*.

⁷⁸ Chantry, pp. 91-92.

⁷⁹ For further study regarding these themes, the reader may profitably consult the works of the Puritans, such as those of Baxter, Owen, Sibbes, Bunyan, Flavel, Brooks, Bolton, etc.;

and the writings of John Murray and Jonathan Edwards (especially his *Religious Affections*).

⁸⁰ Intersity Press, 1961

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-90.

⁸⁴ "Is this way of presenting Christ an attempt to move men by the force of feeling, or of truth? Not, of course, that there is anything wrong with emotion; it is strange for a person to be converted without emotion; what is wrong is the sort of appeal to emotion, and playing on emotion, which harrows people's feelings as a substitute for instructing their minds" (p. 88).

⁸⁵ "Is it calculated to make people feel that they are indeed facing a matter of life and death? Is it calculated to make them see and feel the greatness of God, and the greatness of their sin and need, and the greatness of the grace of Christ? Is it calculated to make them aware of the awful majesty and holiness of God? Will it help them to realize that it is a fearful thing to fall into His hands?" (p. 89).

⁸⁶ *Quest*, p. 308.

Contextualization Revisited

by
Musa A.B. Gaiya

George Peters defines contextualization in theological discussion as discovering “the legitimate implications of the Gospel in a given situation.”¹ This implies a proper understanding of the message of the Gospel and proper understanding of the cultural context. Therefore proper contextualization must take the biblical text and the situation seriously. As the Willowbank Report puts it:

Today’s readers cannot come to the text in a personal vacuum, and should not try to; instead, they should come with an awareness of concerns stemming from their cultural background, personal situation and responding to others. These concerns will influence the questions which are put to the scripture... As we address scripture, scripture addresses us. We find that our culturally conditioned presuppositions are

being challenged and our questions corrected.²

From this perspective, theology is the fruit of a dialogue between the Gospel and the situation. Theology is thus seen as situational. Since there are varied contexts we are bound to have several theologies. In that sense theology or the enterprise of theologizing, which is the expression of faith in context is dynamic — always responding to the challenges of culture and social condition.

We do not intend to go into the debate on contextualization of the Gospel message in Africa or African theologies but we attempt to accentuate a rather neglected aspect of contextualization of the Gospel in Africa, the role played by European missionaries. Our methodology is therefore historical rather than theological.

Before getting into the subject of this paper it would be useful to give a summary of the different theologies that

have emerged in Africa. Justine S. Ukpong has delineated three theological currents that have emerged from the African scene.³

The first is inculturation theology, generally called African Theology, which has arisen from the cultural situation in Africa. However this theology goes further than adapting itself to African culture, it is philosophical, "it involves a conscious engagement of European christian thinking and African religious thought in serious dialogue for the purpose of integrating christianity into the life and culture of the African people."⁴ Some of its apostles are, among protestants, J.S. Mbiti, E.B. Idowu, J.S. Pobee, S.G. Kibicho, amongst Romans Catholics, Vincent Mulago, Charles Nyamity, Bishop Ishishiku Tshibangu, Ngindu Mushete, Aylward Shorter, etc.

The second milestone is South African black theology. A child of African-American black theology, which came to Africa primarily through the writing of James Cone and the role played by Basil Moore a leader of a multi-racial christian movement in South Africa, the University Christian Movement (UCM). Black theology rejects the aspirations of African Theology because according to Mana Buthelezi one of its leading protagonists, African Theology "merely looks at the past and seeks to justify the

present situation of black people."⁵ However, Black Theology seeks to re-interpret the Christian teaching to deal with the dehumanization of the black people in South Africa. Thus Black Theology is a combination of African Negritudism with African American militancy. It is a "reaction to the lethargy of traditional (Christian) theology."⁶ Other proponents of Black Theology are Gabriel Setiloane, Steve Biko, and Adam Small.

The third current is Liberation Theology borrowed from the Latin American experience. It addresses itself to the poverty of the African people caused by alien economic structures imposed on Africa to perpetuate Africa's servitude to foreign economic powers. Its exponents are John M. Mbinga, C. Lyno, Chukwudum B. Okolo, and Zablun Nthamburi.

Although these theologies differ according to their settings they have a common goal: freedom and life. As Ukpong puts it, "Negatively put these issues expresses reaction to negations of freedom and of life's meaningfulness at different levels of African's existence. Positively, they articulate certain phases in the process of Africa's search for freedom and for meaning in life."⁷

For the purpose of this essay we have limited ourselves to African Theology or inculturation theology. It is in this area that African theologians in

West, East and Central Africa have accused European Missionaries of cultural imperialism. Brain Stanley aptly puts the position thus:

Historians, anthropologists and theologians unite in their judgement that missionaries have been guilty of foisting their own cultural values on their converts. They have upset the stability of indigenous social systems, and saddled the younger churches on the Third World with a thoroughly "foreign" christianity.⁸

A.J. Temu, a Kenyan theologian, is an example. He has written "almost all the protestant missionaries in Kenya viewed all native customs and traditions with abhorance."⁹ Hans Küng, supporting this position, has asserted:

Following the example of Paul, the church became Greek with the Greek World and Barbarian with the European Barbarian World. However, it has not become Arabic with the Arabs, Black with the blacks, Indians with the Indians, or Chinese with the Chinese. Viewed as a whole, the church of Jesus Christ has remained a European American affair.¹⁰

Therefore the task of these Third World Theologians is to unwrap the gospel from its alien cultural packaging and

develop expressions of the christian faith which are genuinely indigenous to their particular cultural contexts.

These charges are not entirely wrong, however the contributions of Western Missionaries to the "Africanization" of christianity, without undue sentiments, were far more numerous than are generally acknowledged.

Perhaps the first to come to mind was the contribution of Henry Venn, C.M.S. Honorary Secretary from 1841-1872. He enunciated the native church policy hinged on his doctrine of the "self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating" church. He issued three memoranda in 1851, 1861 and 1866 in which he postulated a native pastorate scheme. In the scheme Venn made a distinction between the office of a missionary who preaches to the heathen and instructs inquirers of recent converts and the office of a pastor, who minister in holy things to a congregation of native christians. While the missionary, maintained by a foreign missionary society, should take nothing of the Gentiles, the pastor must be supported financially by his congregation for "the ox that treadeth out the corn should eat of the same." The converts a missionary made should be organised as soon as possible in little bands each under a headman, and should start at once to make contributions to a native church fund

separate from the funds of the foreign missionary society. Soon the bands should come together and form a congregation under a native teacher or catechist, whom they should endeavour to maintain. Soon the catechist or any other suitable native should be ordained Pastor and the missionary should then move onto fresh ground.¹¹

In Venn's thinking it was the African Pastor who would understand African problems, culture and aspirations better and would put these into consideration in transmitting the Gospel. Although Venn was not directly involved in the process of contextualization itself he saw the need as early as the 1850s to make the Gospel relevant to the situation converts into christianity lived.

Even in the post-Venn era missionaries that came in the late 1880s and early 1890s, mostly evangelicals, attempted to plant a "pure, simple christianity without the trappings of Western civilization. Their idea of upholding indigeneous dress and building and teaching in the vernacular languages in an unsophisticated society had much to commend them."¹²

David Westerlund has demonstrated how much indebted African theologians are to Western missionaries who studied African Traditional Religion as *sui generis*.¹³ The Anglophone African scholars were influenced by the works of a British Protestant Missionary,

Geoffrey Parinder. Francophone African scholars owe their inspiration to Father Placid Tempels who like Parinder was both a missionary and a scholar of African Religion.¹⁴

Steven Kaplan has provided a detailed account of the missionary contribution to inculturation Theology.¹⁵ He drew his illustration from East, Central and South Africa. The central thesis of Kaplan's article is that contextualization, that is, inculturation theology, did not start with African Scholars. African Scholars began where Western Missionaries had left off.

He provided a typology of the methods missionaries adopted in incarnating the Gospel in Africa. The typology ranges from the simple to the complex.

1. *Toleration method*. This occurred where "missionaries agreed to accept the continued existence of certain African social customs," while at the same time maintaining that these customs were "essentially incompatible with a true christian life."¹⁶

This they did with the hope that such customs would die gradually. The most notorious of these customs was polygamy. CMS missionaries in Kenya in 1907 "expressed the view that baptism should not be denied to a man having more than one wife though any church member subsequently taking a

second or additional wife would be subject to church discipline.”¹⁷ This was also the position of Johannes Bachmann and Bishop Colenso of Natal.

2. *Translation Method.* This was an attempt by European Missionaries to express christian ideas and concepts using African idioms.¹⁸ This missionary input is brought out even more forcefully by Lamin Sanneh when he says:

Missionary adoption of the vernacular, therefore was tantamount to adopting indigenous cultural criteria for the message, a piece of radical indigenization far greater than the standard portrayal of mission as Western cultural imperialism.¹⁹

Sanneh concluded “as long as we accept the need to translate, so long shall we continue to face the challenge to relativize worldly success and detigmatize taboo cultures.”²⁰

Missionaries did not find translation work easy, however. A missionary working in Luba-Katanga area could not find an adequate word for the Holy Spirit. He finally used Nsenka which is the title of an official at the local court who advocates and interceeds on behalf of the people before the king.²¹ Other examples abound.²²

3. *Assimilation Method.* This happened when “elements from a non-christian setting have been introduced into essentially christian rituals.”²³ The Dutch Reformed Church in Shonaland (generally averse to indigenous religious expression) allowed an indigenous form of religious expression “sitting or kneeling with hands together, as a signal of respect during prayer.”²⁴ This practice corresponded with the way the Shona ordinary citizen expresses respect in the presence of a dignity.

4. *Christianization Method.* This was when missionaries sought “to create christian versions of Traditional African rites and practices.”²⁵ An example of such African rites is the rites of initiation. This practice could not be assimilated since there was no christian parallel. Thus missionaries cleansed the inherently non-christian character of such rites and shaped them to the use of the church. The Masasi experiment under Bishop Vincent Lucas of the UMCA is an example. The other is the C.M.S. “Christian and Clean” Jando experiment among the Wagogo.²⁶

5. *Acculturation Method.* This was done when the Western Missionaries attempted to preserve features of traditional cultures which they felt were valuable and compatible with the development of christian spirituality. This is a more advance stage than

toleration. It essentially challenges accepted notion of the civilizing mission of missions. Typical of this idea is the statement, "There are times when one almost resents the coming of motor cars and steamers and aeroplanes... The old days, the old tribal life seems so very much more attractive, one deplores the rapid breaking up and shattering of all that was."²⁷ The christianizer works within the traditional institution so to preserve and restore traditional tribal life. The German missionary and anthropologist, Bruno Gutmann was its strongest advocate.²⁸

6. *Incorporation Method.* This entails the introduction of African concepts into the body of "normative" christianity.²⁹ This is philosophical in character. It involves a re-interpretation of christianity to accommodate African way of thinking. This was begun by Placid Tempels. He described his theological/philosophical development as passing through three stages. The first stage was the "priest phase" which introduced him to African (Bantu) conceptual scheme (Bantu ontology), discussed in his book published in 1945, *Bantu Philosophy*. In this book Tempels centered his discussion on the Bantu concept of "vital force" in his attempt to sell to his Western contemporaries Bantu ontology. The third stage was the 'encounter phase.' He describes this stage thus:

It has been repeatedly said that evangelization work should be adapted. Adapted to what? We can build churches in native architecture, introduce African melodies into the liturgy, use styles of vestments borrowed from Manderins or Bedouins, but real adaptation is adaptation of our spirit to the spirit of these people. Christianity — especially christianity in its highest and most spiritual form — is the only possible consummation of the Bantu ideal. But it is essential to set out this perennial doctrine in terms of Bantu thought and to present the christian life that we offer them as a vital strengthening and a vital uplifting.³⁰

The fruit of this "encounter" is the emergence of the Jamaa movement (Jamaa means family-hood). This is "a new vision on the whole of christianity, a new discovery of christ, or perhaps, a first discovery of christianity, of God's good tidings to mankind."³¹ Jamaa sees Jesus and Mary as more than son and mother but in a mystical sense, "they were linked as father and daughter and husband and wife."³² The application of Jamaa is beyond the African context, it is universal, Tempels contends.

We can see a similarity between Tempels' "encounter" with the position of Gabriel M. Setiloane, who sounded equally extremist:

Some German theologians were scandalized when I suggested that I would look for the Messiah - Christos idea in African thinking somewhere in the area of the African Bongaka (witch doctor) and in the possession of individual persons by divinity. I still believe that an authentic African christology lies in that direction, and the future of African theology lies in digging it out and presenting it to the world.³³

All these levels of contextualization only brush the surface of the issue. Some of them are rather elitistic. When the Gospel got to the African context and the Africans were recruited to serve as missionary agents, a process of translatability of the Gospel had begun. Secondly what is often forgotten is that as the Gospel was beginning to be assimilated by the Africans, the African gods did not become dormant. As such there was a spiritual battle. This spiritual dimension has eluded many of these inculturalists.

The problem with contextualization is not whether it is needed or not. Contextualization is inevitable. The

problem is the content of contextual theology. Since African societies are varied any attempt to lump them together and to create a theology for all societies in African would be futile. This is why micro study is imperative. There is a need to formulate and articulate a biblical based tribal or ethnic theology which could be made available as text books for Africa's universities and seminaries. Otherwise the much talked about Africanization of theology in academic circle would continue to be elitist.

Since theology or the enterprise of theologizing is essentially a practical task affecting all aspects of life, the content of theology must reelected a community's situation and interpretation of theological concepts, for example salvation must both be interpreted in its spiritual and practical day to day activities, the same for faith, spirituality, here we are fortunate because Africans have a deeper sense of spirituality than is found in mission christianity. African spirituality is both existential³⁴ and wholistic.³⁵ In Nigeria, for example, there should be a theology that would meet the challenges that have been posed by the incessant religious upheaval. It appears the ordinary christians seem to be asking what should we do?

Realistic achievements have, however, been made in the development

of African Christian liturgical theology. Parrat has enumerated these achievements:

On one level the use of traditional chants and musical instruments is now well established in many churches, as to some extent is the use of African style of dress for the clergy. On a different level, experiments are going on to incorporate aspects of traditional cultic ritual postures for prayer, dancing, aspects of tribal rites of passage (birth, initiation, marriage, death) — into Christian worship.³⁶

He warned, however, that “care will need to be taken not simply to attempt to resuscitate traditional practices which have largely been abandoned, nor to offend the susceptibilities of the more conservative congregations in such experiments for liturgical renewal.”

Our purpose in this paper has been to argue that contextualization of the Gospel in Africa (essentially inculturation) began with Western missionaries and African theologians engaged in this enterprise should give them the credit rather than outright condemnations, and to move from polemics to practical realities.

Theology whether African, Black or Liberation must be faithful to the christian faith whose centrality is in the

salvific act of Jesus Christ. It must also be faithful to the scripture.

NOTES

- ¹ Quoted in Christopher U. Manus, "Contextualization of Theology in Nigeria" in *Nigeria Journal of Theology*, Vol. 1 No. 1, 1983, p.25.
- ² Quoted in Tite Tienou, "The Theological task confronting Evangelical Christianity in Africa Today," the 1978 Byang H. Kato memorial lectures delivered at E.C.W.A. Theological Seminary, Igbaja, Kware State, April 17-20, 1978, p.13.
- ³ See "Current Theology: The Emergence of African Theologies" in *Theological Studies* 1984 Vol.3 No.45.
- ⁴ *Ibid*, p.501.
- ⁵ Ngindu Mushete, "The History of Theology in Africa: From Polemics to Critical Irenics" in koffi Appiahkubi and Sergio Torres (eds.), *African Theology en route* N.Y. Orbis books 1971, p.31.
- ⁶ Ukpong, p.522.
- ⁷ *Ibid*, p.531.
- ⁸ Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, Leicester: Appollos, 1990, p.157.
- ⁹ J.A. Temu, *British Protestant Missions*, London: Longmans, 1971, p.155.
- ¹⁰ Mushete, *op.cit.* p.26.
- ¹¹ J.F.A. Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891*, London: Longmans, 1965. pp.175-176.
- ¹² E.P.T. Crampton, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1976, p.28.
- ¹³ David Westerlund, *African Religion in African Scholarship*, Stockholm: Almavist & Wiksell, 1985.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.18.
- ¹⁵ Steven Caplan, "The Africanization of Missionary Christianity," *History and Typology in J.R.A.* Vol. XVII No. 3, 1986.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.168.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.170.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid*
- ¹⁹ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989, p.3.
- ²⁰ *Ibid*, p.8.
- ²¹ Caplan, p.171.
- ²² For example in Tanzania God was described as a 'Chief,' 'diviner,' 'shepherd.' Mabel Shaw of L.M.S. also used the image of God as 'chief' and translated the christian community as a 'tribe' to teach the Berriba. (See Caplan, pp.171-172).
- ²³ *Ibid*, p.173.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, p.174.
- ²⁵ *Ibid*, p.175.
- ²⁶ *Ibid*, p.178.
- ²⁷ *Ibid*, p.179.
- ²⁸ *Ibid*, p.181.
- ²⁹ *Ibid*.
- ³⁰ *Ibid*, p.182.
- ³¹ *Ibid*.

³². *Ibid.*

³³. "Where are we in African Theology" in Koffi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres (eds.), p.64. Also Ngindu Mushete, 'The History of Theology in Africa' in the same book, pp.23-33.

³⁴. Laurent Magesa, "Authentic African Spirituality" in Aylword Shorter (ed.), *African Christian Spirituality*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1978, p.74.

³⁵. E. IKenga-Metuh, "The Revival of African Spirituality" in *Encounter of Religions in African Cultures*, W.C.C., 1989, p.39.

³⁶. John Parat (ed.), *A Reader in African Christian Theology*, London: S.P.C.K., 1987, pp.144-145.

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***Between Athens and Berlin: the
theological education debate***

by David H. Kelsey

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 229
pp., \$18.99 paperback

No, this is not a hitch-hiker's guide to Europe. It is in fact a very serious book about the nature and purpose of theological education, or, as the author often likes to express it: What is theological about theological education? The author is a professor of theology at Yale Divinity school, New Haven, Connecticut, USA., and perhaps not surprisingly the book he has written is academic and closely argued.

Kelsey sets himself to observe the evolving debate about theological education and what it is that constitutes excellence in theological education. He is concerned not so much with summarizing what each proponent says, but rather with discerning the "movement of their thought", their basic perceptions of what theology is and what education is. This leads Kelsey to propose a typology which he believes will clarify the debate. His dual typology forms the "axis and armature" around which the discussion of the various voices may be organized. Kelsey opts to label the first pole "Athens" because it represents values and perceptions which characterized

ancient Greek education and indeed many centuries of Christian education. It still exerts today a powerful influence on theological education. The "Athens" model had as its central concept "paideia", the formation of character. Then, early in the 19th century, a university was founded in Berlin with, among others, the renowned theologian Schleiermacher on its founding committee. Its perception of excellence was bipolar: rigorous scientific research on the one hand and professional education for ministry on the other. This twin emphasis provides Kelsey with his "Berlin" model. His thesis is that these two models provide a conceptual framework within which the different voices in the debate can be situated and which can bring into focus the issues at stake in the discussion about excellence in theological education.

Kelsey's first chapter clarifies the two models and their associated terminology. Chapters 2 and 3 trace respectively the historical evolution of the two models in 19th century Europe (John Henry Newman's The Idea of a University) and in early 20th century America (W.R. Harper, Robert L. Kelly, William Adams Brown, H. Richard Niebuhr, Daniel Day Williams and James M. Gustafuson). Chapter 4 examines authors who have contributed significantly to the ongoing debate in

the 1980s. It is here that a secondary axis, "unity" - "plurality", is added to the first. "Unity" relates to the identity of the "Christian thing" or source subject matter of theology, while "plurality" refers to the diverse world with which theological education must also concern itself. A variety of authors are discussed who promote different permutations of emphases within this expanded model. Some of these such as Edward Farley and the Mud Flower Collective (a group of seven women theological educators) negotiate their position basically from the "Athens" perspective, while others, like Joseph C. Hough Jr., John B. Cobb Jr. and Max Stackhouse argue their various positions from nearer the "Berlin" perspective. Finally, in chapter 6, Charles Wood seems to offer a new synthesis of the two models. In a last chapter, Kelsy seeks to draw "morals of the tale", that is, confusions to be avoided, ambiguities to be clarified, lessons to be learnt.

Without question the book clears the muddied waters of the debate. It will help answer the question, Why is it that one school puts so much emphasis on one aspect of theological education while another places it elsewhere? The author obviously has a clear grasp of the issues. His keen eye exposes distinctions which a less discerning eye would not capture. His discussion of the

different authors seems even-handed and objective although his disquiet about the implications of certain positions frequently surfaces ("worried" and "worrisome" seem to be his favorite words). He concludes that the two models are ultimately irreconcilable, and that theological educators have to settle for an uneasy, negotiated, truce.

The following cautionary comments about the book might, however, be added. The book concentrates on the North American scene; those from other countries would be interested in the details only insofar as they illustrate principles. The book does not make for easy reading; as the author himself concedes: "At first exposure the relations among (The different approaches) are likely to seem hopelessly confused." For this reviewer at least, some of that confusion remained even at the end of the book. Certainly the confusion would be greater if the book had been written by an author less on top of his subject, but this is certainly not light holiday or bedtime reading.

Theological educators in Africa, reading the book, will however be gratified to realise that the problems that they grapple with (overarching purpose of theological education, curriculum content, the balance between theory and practice, the concern to do justice at one and the same time to the

source and also the multiple demands of contemporary pluralistic society) - all these are not peculiar to them but are being wrestled with by their colleagues in other parts of the world.

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***Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia
Origins of the Evangelical Church
Mekane Yesus***
by *Gustav Aren*
(Stockholm and ECMY, Addis Ababa:
EFS Forlaget, 1978) 486 pp., \$5.00

African church history has been enriched by the publication of this book which was a doctoral dissertation submitted to Uppsala University in 1978. Dr. Gustav Aren served in Ethiopia as evangelist, teacher and administrator with the Swedish Evangelical Mission and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus from 1945 - 1972 and from 1972 - 1978 as researcher and writer.

Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia is an excellent detailed account of mission-in-partnership. In the past, mission historiographers were tempted to record only the exploits, experiences, activities and contributions of missionaries from overseas. Archival

and other source documents are readily available in mission sending countries to produce this promotional kind of writing. On the other hand, studies that are largely dependent on oral research and depict only the activities and drama of the indigenous actors somehow miss the ecumenical and international dimension of the church. Dr. Aren objectively and skillfully weaves the stories and contributions of both the Ethiopian and expatriate evangelists to produce an intricate and colourful tapestry that is a definite complement to the historiography of the African church. Aren's objective is, "... to call attention to some of those pioneers, men and women, who through their witness, example and leadership gave rise to the Evangelical Church in Eritrea and then to the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus." (p.19).

In 1972 Gustav Aren was commissioned by the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (ECMY) to write the official history of the Evangelical Church Eritrea and that of ECMY, covering the period from 1866-1916. Aren is an indefatigable researcher and leaves no stone unturned to accomplish his purpose. His primary sources included pertinent mission archives in England, Switzerland, Ethiopia and Sweden, where the Swedish Evangelical Mission retains a rich store of Ethiopian material.

Adequate oral research was conducted over a period of several years. Aren's book is quite readable containing a five-page table of contents, maps, pictures, a glossary and an index of proper names.

Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia is more than a church history. It is also significant because of its missiological insights, the following of which are a sampling:

1. The fulfillment of a mission vision. In 1850 CMS missionary Krapf described the Oromo of Ethiopia as the "Germans of Africa". His romantic vision was that if only the Oromos could be reached with the Gospel, all of Africa could be evangelized! This captured the imagination of a young Pietist Lutheran minister, Louis Harms, who was instrumental in opening a missionary training centre at Hermannsburg in 1853. During the next 25 years, there were several unsuccessful attempts by the Hermannsburg Mission to make contact with the Oromo. The Lutheran Church in Sweden had experienced a spiritual awakening in 1840, and one of the positive results of this spiritual renewal was missionary outreach. In 1865 the Swedish Evangelical Mission took up the vision of Krapf and Harms, and after several decades of ministry to enslaved Oromos in the Red Sea port area of Massawa, an expedition of

indigenous Oromo missionaries finally reached the heartland of the Oromo in Jimma and Wollega. So, it was 50 years later that Harms vision was realized when evangelists were located in Jimma (1897) and in Boji, Wollega (1899).

2. The attempt to revitalize and reform the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The evangelical pioneers from Europe had personally experienced the Pietistic tradition in which the reading and studying of the Scriptures for oneself had formed them into 'readers' rather than mere 'listeners' (p.115). Their individual conversion experiences were seen as crucial, because the European evangelists in Ethiopia believed that reformation can occur when the Scriptures are read, studied carefully and obeyed, they encouraged those within the Orthodox Church to read and study the Bible for themselves. They were partially successful as evidenced in 1912 when two prominent reformers, Qeshi Solomon Atsiqu and Zera-Tsion Muse declared, "We were firmly convinced that the Ethiopian Church would gradually be renewed, that errors and deficiencies would be corrected" (p.182). These reformers firmly believed that there would be a real awakening and had no intentions of breaking away from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC). But a sweeping reformation did not occur. Rather, a clash developed between the

charismatics and ecclesiastics, between the political machine and the school of the prophets; consequently the reformers were driven from their own church. It appears that throughout Ethiopian history, rulers have viewed religious conformity as a prerequisite to national unity; therefore reformation proved to be a threat to the status quo. A new possibility began to emerge - that of establishing a separate and distinct evangelical church in Ethiopia. This placed the evangelical pioneers in a dilemma. Were they being schismatic? In 1872 the Swedish Lutheran pioneers performed their first baptism - and that by immersion!

3. *The Scriptures translated into the languages of the people.* Aba Rumi's translation of the Bible into Amharic (1840) did much to promote a keen in Bible study among the clergy of the Orthodox Church. This interest sparked the establishment of a beachhead to the local population in Eritrea through gifted Swedish pioneer missionaries, dr. Karl and Mrs. Elsie Winqvist who were able linguists. With the assistance of skilled Eritrean scholars, they completed a New testament translation into the Tigrinya language in 1909. The entire Tigrinya Bible was finally completed in 1956 and was commended by experts "... for idiomatic accuracy and poetic beauty" (p.337). Then there is the unusual story of the translation of

the Bible into the Orominya nearly one hundred years ago. Onesimus Nesib was liberated from slavery by the Swedish missionaries in Massawa. With the assistance of Aster, a freed Oromo girl, Onesimus translated the entire Bible into Orominya as well as hymns and catechetical material. April 15, 1904 was a proud day for Onesimus when he presented the Oromo Bible to the governor of Wollega together with an official letter of permission to preach and teach, signed and sealed by Minilik, Emperor of Ethiopia.

We await the publication of another volume of more recent history which Gustav Aren is currently writing in Sweden. A younger generation of Ethiopian church historians may view Aren's book as a flagship for Ethiopian church history. I highly commend the book as a valuable contribution to the missiology or African church history section of any theological library. The book may be purchased from Mekane Yesus Seminary, Box 1247, Addis Ababa for the reasonable price of US \$5.00 (excluding mailing charges), or through contact with Uppsala University re: "Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia XXXII."

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A Theology of the New Testament
by George Eldon Ladd
revised by Donald A. Hagner
(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 764
pp., \$34.95

Twenty-five years ago I had my formal introduction to New Testament Theology as an academic discipline. The lectures may have been less than compelling, but the reading interested me greatly. Our primary textbook, *A Theology of the New Testament*, by George Eldon Ladd, had just rolled off the press (1974) and stimulated all sorts of new areas of theological reflection for me. The book served as an excellent initiation to the field, and I have since had the joy of introducing my own students to NT Theology through Ladd's *magnum opus*.

And now, twenty years later, a revised edition of this compendium has been made available to a new generation of students. Unfortunately, Ladd's death came before he himself could carry out the revision, though he had already indicated some of the areas he wished to work on. The actual task of revising was eventually entrusted to Donald Hagner, a former student of Ladd and later his colleague on the faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary.

The revised edition of Ladd's *A Theology of the New Testament* has

been published in paperback form, presumably to keep its price as low as possible. Yet at \$34.95, one wonders how many students or pastors will be able to afford a personal copy of this important work. Certainly every seminary and graduate school library should obtain a copy, and most post-graduate level institutions would do well to consider buying an entire classroom set for student use.

Aimed at theological students in post-graduate level programs, the textbook is not intended for light reading, and some students may find its style rather dense at times. Yet its overall readability is good. A knowledge of Greek and Hebrew is not a necessity for understanding the text but may prove helpful. Many terms from these two languages (and occasionally Aramaic) are included in transliterated form. Technical German terms are also employed with translations for the non-German reader.

Each chapter in Ladd is preceded by a bibliography of relevant and significant literature (all in English), and sometimes additional bibliographies introduce sub-sections in the chapter. The footnotes throughout the book are copious but not extraneous. A wealth of material is to be found therein, allowing the reader to verify or amplify various ideas.

After an introductory chapter outlining the major movements in the history of NT Theology as a discipline, Ladd examines the theological highlights of the various sections of the NT: the Synoptic Gospels, John, the book of Acts, the Pauline corpus, the Catholic Epistles, and the Apocalypse. Within each of these major divisions are individual chapters, each treating a different theme contained in the given material. For example, the section on the Fourth Gospel has a chapter dealing with John's eschatology. In the case of the General Epistles, the chapters are devoted to individual books, with 2 Peter and Jude combined into a single chapter.

Finally, the book has three indexes: Authors, Biblical and Other Ancient Writings, and Subjects. The latter is a most welcome addition to the revised edition. Hunting through the older edition for scattered pieces of information was time-consuming and sometimes frustrating. No longer does the Authors Index list every author's name or every occurrence of a name. The references to the bibliographies and to some footnotes have been eliminated. The reason for this change is probably a practical one of space, but the result is somewhat less than satisfying. Perhaps the Subject Index is intended to act as a supplementary tracking device for bibliography.

Besides the addition of the Subject Index, four other distinct areas of improvement can be noted in the revised edition of *A Theology of the NT*. To begin with, in keeping with the current practice in North America, the language has been made more inclusive. Thus, "Jesus viewed all men and women as sinful" (p. 53) replaces the former "Jesus viewed all men as sinful". This aspect has, however, been treated somewhat unevenly, as for example on p. 390 where only men are identified as prophets in the early church.

A second updated area is the bibliographic entries. NT Theology has produced a large amount of research over the past twenty years, and Hagner has helpfully added several recent scholarly publications to the bibliographies. For instance, fully half of the books and articles cited in relation to the parables were published after 1974, with revised editions of earlier works being noted where appropriate. Some of Hagner's omissions are, however, surprising. One such is the lack of a reference to the Fortress Press series *Pauline Theology* in the chapters on Paul.

The third significant change to Ladd is the inclusion of two further chapters that help to balance the book. Since the author himself did not live long enough to pen these chapters he envisioned adding, Hagner has used material by

two other well-known evangelicals: R.T. France ("Matthew, Mark, and Luke") and David Wenham ("Unity and Diversity in the NT"). The former chapter, which has long appeared in the French translation of Ladd's *Theology*, provides insight into the theology of the individual Synoptic writers. Wenham's essay, which appears as an appendix, rounds out the work and allows the reader to see the NT as a whole rather than as a mere collage of unrelated theological statements.

A fourth and equally useful update is to be found in the initial chapter, where Hagner has a brief section (six pages) covering the developments in NT Theology during the past twenty years.

As to the text as a whole, the reviser decided against making (substantial) changes to the text and has instead contented himself with occasional footnotes to elucidate or update the text. For example, on page 78 a footnote explains, with appropriate bibliography, the current view of Judaism among NT scholars (covenant nomism) as opposed to the system-of-merit view maintained by Ladd. These footnotes are appropriately marked as originating with Hagner rather than being Ladd's contribution.

The discipline of NT Theology can be approached in a variety of manners, as a brief survey of the literature indicates. Thus the indefinite article in

the title of Ladd's book is significant: *A Theology of the NT*. Apart from the presuppositional differences among NT theologians, one must also consider the methodological stance taken by the author. Among recent offerings by evangelicals, that of Leon Morris (*NT Theology*) follows a somewhat loose chronological development of NT Theology by starting with the Pauline corpus and progressing toward the later writings. On the other hand, Donald Guthrie (*NT Theology*) proceeds topically, surveying the whole NT for each subject introduced. As for Ladd, he follows the history of the church: the ministry of Jesus (the Synoptics and John), the founding of the church (Acts), the building up of the churches (the epistles), and the church at the end of the first century (Revelation). Within each era and for each author he then examines several theological aspects.

Each of the above approaches has its strengths and weaknesses. What I appreciate about Ladd's methodology is that the reader comes away with a solid sense of an individual author's theology. Thus the theology of Paul becomes clear in its own right. (In the original version this particularity was not highlighted for the Synoptic writers, a problem that has been corrected in the revised edition). The danger that exists in Ladd's approach is that the reader will see the NT as fragmented and will

miss out on the necessary theological synthesis. The new material by Wenham helps to demonstrate that the theology of one NT author is not to be set over against that of another but that the two (or more) work together into a coherent whole.

One of the other strengths of Ladd's book is his effort to ground NT Theology solidly in its OT background. This aspect is particularly in evidence in the chapters dealing with the Synoptics, but it is not forgotten in the other major sections of the book. It is important that students realize that the theology of the NT is not divorced from but continuous with that of the OT and represents its consummation.

It would be gratuitous to criticize a book because it cannot be all things to all readers. Such is doubly true when the author himself is not the one responsible for the revisions made to his text. Nevertheless, I would like to mention some areas where the text needs to be supplemented by the professor (directly or through assignments). Certain topics did not appear to be important considerations in the early 1970's in United States and so were not covered by Ladd's text in any depth. Two that fall in this area are the role of women (in the teachings of Jesus and the writings of Paul) and Pauline pneumatology. In addition, I would like to see something done to address the

question of Paul's theology of mission. Concerning topics specifically relevant to our African context, some can be handled through student term papers or projects. Others, however, such as Paul's theology of the spirit world could well have been discussed more thoroughly in the text itself. This gap may need to be filled either by assigned readings or through another pedagogical approach.

In several areas, NT scholarship has made advances that appear only in the new bibliographies in Ladd. It would have been helpful, for example, if Hagner had included a footnote on p. 91, outlining how Blomberg's more recent theories can supplement what Ladd has to say about the canons of interpretation for the parables. In some cases, significant points seem to have been completely overlooked by the reviser. In the sections covering the Person and Work of Christ, the great christological hymn of Phil. 2:5-11 takes a central position. Yet not even in a footnote is the so-called "kenosis theory" mentioned nor are Hawthorne's interesting perspectives on the passage mentioned. Obviously a single textbook cannot cover everything, but these two areas would not have required a great intrusion on the part of the reviser.

For the overall impact of Ladd's *A Theology of the NT*, however, I have nothing but praise. The level of

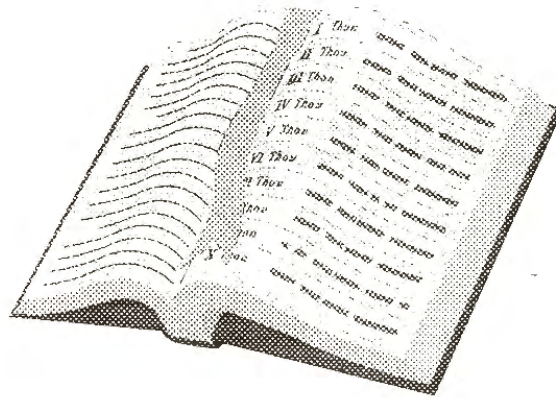
scholarship is commendable, as can be verified by the fact that even non-evangelical theologians feel compelled to interact with this work as a serious entry in the field. As to Ladd's own evangelical commitment, that is beyond question, though his particular persuasions on various points may not necessarily correspond with those of the reader.

The updated version of this potential classic ensures that yet another generation of students will benefit from Ladd's theological insights and ability to communicate clearly and engagingly. This important tool for NT scholarship deserves to be widely disseminated. Keeping in mind the above caveats, the book makes an ideal base text for a NT Theology course. I plan to continue using Ladd's *A Theology of the NT* in my own courses (hoping for a quick release of a revised French version!) and heartily recommend it to others as well.

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