

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

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

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



Buy me a coffee

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



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

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

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



TSF BULLETIN

OCTOBER 1980

TSF BULLETIN VOL. 4 No. 1
(Formerly **TSF NEWS & REVIEWS**)
published by Theological Students Fellowship,
233 Langdon, Madison, WI 53703

Editor: Mark Lau Branson
(TSF General Secretary)
Advisory Editors: Clark H. Pinnock
(Toronto School of Theology)
Paul A. Mickey
(Duke Divinity School, on leave '80-'81)
Copy Editor: Elaine Good
(TSF Administrative Assistant)

Associate Editors: Stephen T. Davis
(Claremont Men's College) *Philosophy*;
Robert E. Frykenberg (University of Wisconsin) *World Religions*; Robert L. Hubbard
(Denver Seminary) *Old Testament*; Richard Mouw
(Calvin College) *Ethics*; Thomas C. Oden
(Drew University Theological School) *Apostolorum
Theology*; Grant R. Osborne
(Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) *New
Testament*; Donald Tinder (New College,
Berkeley) *Church History*; Keith Yandell
(University of Wisconsin) *World Religions*.

Contributing Editors (Professors): Donald
Loesch (University of Dubuque Theological
Seminary); Russell Burck (Lutheran
Presbyterian-St. Lukes Medical Center,
Chicago); Donald Buteyn (San Francisco
Theological Seminary); Donald Dayton
(Northern Baptist Theological Seminary);
Charles Ellenbaum (College of DuPage);
Larry Hurtado (University of Manitoba);
Bernard Ramm (American Baptist Seminary
of the West, Berkeley); James Parker, III
(Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary);
Stanley Riegel (Trinity Western College,
B.C.); Gerald Sheppard (Union Theological
Seminary, New York); R. Edward Turner
(Andrews University Theological School);
David Watson (Perkins School of Theology).

Contributing Editors (Students): Douglas
Anderson (Graduate Theological Union,
Berkeley); Vaughn Baker (Perkins School of
Theology); Terry Donaldson (Toronto
School of Theology); Kapp Johnson
(Claremont Graduate School); Susanne
Johnson (Princeton Theological Seminary);
David Jones (Vanderbilt University); Hal
Miller (Boston University); Kenneth Morris
(University of Georgia); Alan Padgett (Drew
University Theological School); John
Simpson (Fuller Theological Seminary).

TSF BULLETIN (Formerly **TSF News &
Reviews**) is published five times during
the school year (October-May).
Membership in TSF (\$10/yr; \$8-students)
includes both *Bulletin* and *THEMELIOS*
(3 issues), the theological journal of the
International Fellowship of Evangelical
Students. Separate subscription rates are:
Bulletin-\$6.50/yr; *Themelios*-\$4.50/yr.
Bulk rates are available on request. Student
Group Rate-10 or more copies delivered to
one address at \$7. per person. All sub-
scriptions and correspondence (except as
noted on special order forms) should be
sent to Theological Students Fellowship,
233 Langdon, Madison, WI 53703. TSF is a
division of Inter-Varsity Christian

CONTENTS

ACADEME (Reports from seminary classrooms, special events and TSF chapters.)

TSF Bulletin and Membership Survey by Mark Lau Branson	2
TSF at Perkins by Ted Campbell	4
Important Dates	4

FOUNDATIONS (Doing Theology on the basics of classical faith.)

The Inspiration and Interpretation of the Bible by Clark H. Pinnock	4
--	---

INTERSECTION (The integration of theological studies with ethics, academic disciplines, and ecclesiastical institutions.)

An Evangelical Observes a WCC Assembly by Clark H. Pinnock	7
Christianity and Homosexuality: A Brief Biblio- graphy by David W. Gill	8

INQUIRY (Questions, proposals, discussions, research reports on theological and biblical issues.)

A Summary of Francis Andersen's 1980 Payton Lectures by Kenneth Litwak	9
---	---

SPIRITUAL FORMATION (Probing questions, sugges- tions, encouragement in areas of personal/ spiritual growth.)

Burnout by Mary Berg, R.N. and Mark Lau Branson	10
---	----

REVIEWS (Notes and critiques on recent books and periodicals.)

Noteworthy Articles	12
Book Reviews (Itemized on back cover)	13

publish reviews. For those in biblical studies, student membership in the IBR would be worthwhile (write to Carl Armending, 2330 Westbrook Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 1W6). We also know of many areas of study which would benefit from special bibliographies--and graduate students would be welcome writers. Again, let us know what you are doing and what we can do.

Printing: We have received some comments on type size (too small) and pictures (too dark). We may need to go with a typesetter rather than our trusty typewriter, but that would up costs about \$500 per issue. We may change the reduction or type style (both will be attempted in coming months). We don't want to cut back on the amount of content we can have or increase the number of pages significantly. All this is to say we hear you and will try new approaches. We want to maintain the informality without making the *Bulletin* hard to read. We have hit about 50% on clear reproduction of pictures with our current printer. If we are able to overcome difficulties, we will resume that feature in coming months. Upside-down pages and printing "holidays" are also on our hit list. Return any poorly printed issues for replacment--this keeps us informed.

Effective November, subscription to *TSF Bulletin* and *Themelios* will be \$10--the student rate will be \$8. This includes three issues of *Themelios* (\$4.50 if billed separately) and five issues of *TSF Bulletin* (\$6.50). Single-year student subscriptions at the \$5.00 rate will be accepted through October. Although we continue to subsidize subscriptions for students, other recipients will be asked to pay full price. As before, all subscriptions begin in October and end in May.

TSF is also expanding its operations--with a full-time General Secretary last year and a full-time Administrative Assistant this year. Opportunities to meet with students and faculty, publish booklets and periodicals, initiate conferences and retreats and correspond with chapters increase constantly. Over the next five years we would like to have a field staffer in each of six regions. We need the support of members, friends and churches to accomplish this. If you believe we are providing a needed ministry, please support us through donations, encouragement and prayer. We are looking for 100 friends who will be "sustaining subscribers" at \$50 a year. This will allow us to continue the above rates in spite of printing and postage increases. Please prayerfully consider this for yourself and speak with friends.

A discount price of \$7 per person will be available for student groups ordering 10 or more copies to one address (for both the *Bulletin* and *Themelios*).

TSF AT PERKINS

Dear Mark,

I am now writing as representative of the newly-formed Athanasian Theological Society at Perkins. We have worked out the following Statement of Purpose for the Society:

The Athanasian Theological Society is a group of students in the Perkins Community interested in the study of new evangelical theologies. By "new evangelical theologies" we understand those theologies which affirm the centrality of Scripture and the use of modern critical scholarship, and which emphasize the necessity of a personal experience of conversion from self to Christ and the necessity of the Church's social witness.

We adopted this statement in lieu of a doctrinal confession.

When we first began, we went by the title Bullwinkle Theological Society. I rather liked that one, but sobriety prevailed, and thus we were sanctified.

Although it is not expressly stated in our Statement of Purpose, one of the aims of the group will be to maintain liaisons with TSF, Evangelicals for Social Action, and the Evangelical Women's Caucus. I do not know if TSF has any provision for such an "unofficial" relationship, but please let us know how we can keep in touch. I'd like to begin receiving *TSF News and Reviews*. If it's possible, you might send some information on how others in the community can subscribe.

We're excited about our organization, and are interested in maintaining close links with TSF. We want to thank you for your visit, which served to solidify interest in the group. Looking forward to hearing from you, I am

Yours in Christ,
Ted Campbell

DATES

Nov. 4 (6 p.m.) - Nov. 5 (12 noon). The Institute of Biblical Research, Decennial Meeting, Dallas. Papers by Metzger & Hubbard, seminars by Oswalt and Longenecker. (For information, write to Carl Armending, 2330 Westbrook Mall, Vancouver, VC V6T 1W6.)

Nov. 6-9. American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature Annual meetings, Dallas. (AAR - Consultation on Evangelical Theology: Gerald Sheppard on Rogers-McKim; a panel including Clark Pinnock and Martin Marty on "The Future of Evangelical Theology.")

Nov. 7-8. Wesleyan Theological Society at Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, MO. Focus on hermeneutics. (For information, write to Don Dayton, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, 660 E. Butterfield Road, Lombard, IL 60148.)

FOUNDATIONS *(Doing Theology on the basics of classical faith.)*

THE INSPIRATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE

By Clark H. Pinnock

The Crucial Link

The question of the authority and interpretation of the Bible is a critical one for the church because it is irrevocably linked to it as the indispensable source of it's knowledge of God's word and revelation. Although we all wish that debates about the Bible would go away leaving us to get on with the all-important task of living out its message, a better understanding of its nature and authority is still needed in many parts of the church, and the quest to achieve it cannot be put aside.

The context for our thinking about this issue in North America, at least in Protestant circles, is a serious polarization between "liberal" elements which have let the subject drop out of sight, and "conservative" forces which have raised the stakes by inflating the categories involved, creating a major chasm at least for popular theology and church life. Somehow we have to transcend this gulf and bring about reconciliation by proposing an understanding of biblical authority which is really comprehensive and satisfying.

I believe that the doctrinal model or key which could enable us to do this contains the three elements found in a significant statement of Paul's: "We have this *treasure* in *earthen* vessels to show that the transcendent *power* belongs to God not to us." (2 Cor 4:7) The Bible is a rich treasure, the Word of God, mediated to us in a human vehicle, and capable of being in the power of the Spirit the place where we can stand to hear God speak to us today.

The Word of God

The first thing we need to have is a sense of proportion. At this point many conservative Christians go wrong. We pride ourselves on our fidelity to the Bible's claims for itself, and yet distort those claims in a measure. In reaction to religious liberalism we tend to exaggerate our conclusions about inspiration beyond what the data actually require. For instance, we employ the "prophetic" model (the idea that God himself speaks every verse in the Bible) to account for the whole extent of scripture, even though all of scripture is plainly not in the prophetic mode. When Luke expresses his purpose in writing the gospel (1:1-4), he does not pretend to be setting forth an inspired utterance, but a well researched historical record. Ecclesiastes and Job do not invite us to regard those books as divine utterances from beginning to end, and indeed no reader can do so. But because we do tend to see Scripture this way we also tend to draw unwarranted conclusions which get us into trouble, as we see in the attitude which regards every verse as timelessly inerrant and unalterably sacrosanct. Even though it is obvious that Jesus did not handle the Old Testament text in this rigid way, we try to ignore it and explain away such "difficulties."

Another tendency that we have along the same lines is to make the Bible more authoritarian than it wants to be. Somehow we do not listen when Paul tells his readers that these are his opinions and that they as mature Christians ought to think things through for themselves in the Spirit. He admits that even he knows only "in part" and invites all of us to enter into the process of discerning God's will. But we conservative evangelicals "know better." We know the Bible is more infallible than that, and will not grant even Paul such a humble place. We insist on making the apostle our doctrinal master despite his protests that he wants to be a colleague and friend. And so we elevate the Bible to impossible heights, lock up the gospel of liberty in a tight little box and claim we are doing it in defense of divine revelation and for the honour of Jesus. As one who has done this, I think I understand *why* we do it. Our context makes us afraid of the dangers implicit in liberal theology and radical biblical criticism (dangers not entirely imagined) and we respond by tightening up our doctrine of inspiration and shutting out those who cannot agree with us. But to claim more for the Bible than the Bible evidently claims for itself is a sign of weakness not of strength. It means that we are grasping for a worldly security God has not given and trying to protect the Bible with walls God has not built.

A Human Vehicle

It has always been difficult for conservative theology which has placed such emphasis on scripture as the word of God to do equal justice to the human character of the Bible. This produces two unfortunate results. It obscures the servant character of revelation which is the glory of the Christian message, God coming to us, not in superior power, but in the form of a servant. It somehow misses the wonder of God's decision to accommodate himself and his word to the conditions of time and place in order to communicate effectively with us. The human weakness of the Bible, like that of the apostle Paul about which he wrote,

is not a liability and limitation, but a key ingredient in the wisdom of God which seems foolish to the world. We make a serious mistake when we resist the human weakness of the Bible. The second result of not facing up to the Bible's humanity is the enormous difficulty for interpretation this creates for the reader when confronted with it as always happens. It leaves the reader unable to cope with the human dimension which is there whether acknowledged or not.

To give a few examples of the human side of Scripture, we could refer to the different ways in which texts were written and edited, to the local character of their intention and composition, to the use made of current wisdom and imagery. Minor discrepancies are easy to find, psalms are occasionally duplicated, merely human sentiments are often voiced. Differing viewpoints on the same topic are expressed, the physical universe is described in a pre-scientific manner, the time perspective in prophecies is often foreshortened. Attitudes expressed in the Old Testament, such as Elijah's appeal for revenge, are cancelled and transcended in the New. Not to recognise such aspects of the Bible for what they are will either make us disillusioned with it or else lead us to erroneous conclusions.

What about biblical criticism then? It is a sustained investigation of the humanity of the Bible, its language and history, its context and genres. It has produced for us immensely valuable tools for discovering the meaning of the text. It has also been the occasion, however, for a good deal of speculative reconstruction of the biblical text and a debunking of its message on the basis of frankly humanistic assumptions. For this reason, many of us have reacted sharply to it and have been overly suspicious of it. There seems to be a technology of criticism in the spirit of the Enlightenment that does not submit itself to God speaking in the Scripture. At the same time, because of our sometimes inflated conceptions of biblical inspiration, we evangelicals have resisted taking the Bible literally and resorted to fantastic reconstructions ourselves in order to explain away the apparent meaning of the present text. Having the cock crow six times to save Mark from inconsistency is a humorous recent example of this. We have no reason to fear biblical criticism which devotes itself to the study of the canonical text of the Bible which we believe God has willed for the sake of our salvation.

The Spiritual Dynamic

A mere doctrine of the authority of the Bible is an empty, useless thing if it does not help us discover how to determine the meaning of the Bible for our lives. If people are not hearing God speak through Scripture, no theological defense of its authority is going to convince them. Furthermore, even a high view of the Bible cannot prevent them from refusing the truth and holding it at a distance, refusing to let it make contact with their lives. It is of utmost importance to ask how the Bible can come alive for us.

It helps me to see this outworking of biblical authority in a dynamic rather than a static way. The Bible should not be seen as a legal compendium of timelessly applicable divine oracles, but more as the place to stand when one wants to hear God's word and to discern his will. Reading the Bible is the way we can orient our lives according to the parameters of definitive past revelation and, open to the Holy Spirit, receive a direction for our life and work at hand. The Bible is like a means of grace, a sacramental circle, where we can stand together with the family of God and seek the will of the Lord prayerfully for our time and place.

The Bible itself assists us to reconceive of it in a dynamic way by means of its own composition and

nature. For one thing it is a covenant document, given not just to inform our minds, but to shape our character and to motivate our will. It is an inexhaustible resource, made up of incredibly diverse elements which come together in a grand symphony through the work of the Spirit to further our progress as the people of God. It does not announce a law dangling over our heads like the sword of Damocles, but the promise of the coming of the kingdom of God, pointing us forward not backward to the Christ who is coming to reign. Now we know "in part" even when we read from the Bible, but then "face to face." Now our prophecy, even when recorded in the Bible, is "imperfect," but when the "perfect" is come, we shall see everything plainly. Even the Bible does not know everything it would like to. Even the Bible sees in a mirror dimly, and also we who read from it. But it plants a glorious hope within us and points us in the directions we should be moving. The Bible never intended for us to employ it as an instrument of oppression.

This does not mean that it is safe to avoid the scriptural letter and follow the inner light instead. The inner light can be a quick route to outer darkness! We want to hear exactly what the text has to say in exactly the shade of meaning that it had when first written down. Otherwise the truth of the text would turn out to be the reader's opinions of that moment and the real authority of the Scripture would be lost. How frequently these "relevant" self-interpretations of ours turn out in the long run to be misconceptions which obscure the word of God. Let us by all means begin with the original sense and meaning of the text.

But when we do that, the first thing we discover is the dynamism of the text itself. Not only is its basic message forward looking, the text itself records a very dynamic process of revelation, in which the saving message once given gets continually and constantly updated, refocussed, and occasionally revised. Just consider the progression between the Old and the New Testament, how the coming of the Messiah introduced crucial reinterpretations into the earlier revelational process. Or consider how the four gospels present different portraits of Jesus, shaping the tradition reverently for their own contexts, and inviting us to think of Jesus afresh for our time and place. Thus a biblical text, say in Isaiah, not only has an original meaning in the 8th century BC, but also a place in the history of interpretation in which unsuspected nuances of meaning surface because of what was seen later on. The authority of the Bible then, in the light of this observation, is not a static affair of soliciting infallible oracles to suit one's need. By presenting us with a process of clarification and education and by offering us many angles of interpretation on God's word, the Bible serves us as a tutor and guide in our own covenant pilgrimage. Precisely because the Bible itself updates its own material, placing older texts in new contexts, it helps us to do the same thing where we are. Because the Bible is inherently a dynamic book it can be the covenantal scripture it claims to be for us.

We begin with the original sense of our polydimensional Bible, but we do not stop there. We live with the Bible in the hope that God will cause ever more light to break forth from his Holy Word. We seek the leading of the Spirit into all truth, into the deeper and fuller penetration of God's intended message. We look to the One who contextualised his word in ancient times to do the same thing again with us, to make that word alive again in our hearing. The art of interpreting the Bible (it is not a science) is not something we can do

all by ourselves. We will need all the help we can get from readers who have gone before, from Christians studying the Bible in different contexts than ours, and from our brothers and sisters who stand and more importantly kneel beside us. Our ability to understand the Bible is as broken and imperfect as all the other things we try to do for God, and yet we can gain strength and truth from it because of the indwelling Spirit testifying to the risen Lord.

Conclusion

I hope these remarks are helpful, and represent a going beyond both liberal and fundamentalist dead-ends. From my conversion thirty years ago to this hour I have always loved the Bible and the message it conveys to me, and always desired to place my life under its authority. I think we all need to do so. It has not been easy for me to conceptualise this doctrine or to defend it against threats real or imagined. Doctrines take a long time to develop, and the process never really ends. So we must try to be patient in our discussions about the Bible. Scripture is not a "problem" - it is a priceless treasure bringing our Saviour to us and us to him. I only hope that these humble reflections will lead some others into more of an experience of the blessing of Scripture and less of an experience of Scripture as a bone of contention and a problem.

[Portions printed concurrently in *Sojourners*.]

Editor's note: Several publications can be of valuable service concerning scriptural authority and interpretation.

The Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals by Paul Achtemeier (Westminster) is reviewed in this issue of *News and Reviews*.

Holy Scripture by G. C. Berkouwer (Eerdmans) will probably be known as a classic in modern Reformed theology.

The Authority of the Old Testament by John Bright (Baker) helps one move from hermeneutics to theology to preaching.

History, Criticism and Faith by Colin Brown (ed.) presents four excellent essays on biblical criticism (IVP, available from TSF for \$3.00).

The Debate About the Bible: Inerrancy Versus Infallibility by Stephen Davis (Westminster) presents a "liberal-evangelical" position.

The New Testament and Criticism by George E. Ladd (Eerdmans) is probably the best overview of biblical criticism by an evangelical author.

New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods edited by I. Howard Marshall (Eerdmans) includes a number of valuable contributions.

Biblical Revelation by Clark Pinnock (Moody) foreshadows the creative, faithful article printed above.

Special Revelation and the Word of God by Bernard Ramm (Eerdmans) is one of the clearest discussions of the nature and purpose of Scripture.

The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach by Jack Rogers and Donald McKim (Harper & Row) attempts a thorough tracing of conceptual models referring to just how we describe scriptural accuracy.

The Two Horizons by Anthony Thiselton (Eerdmans) promises to be very helpful in hermeneutics.

INTERSECTION

(The integration of theological studies with ethics, academic disciplines, and ecclesiastical institutions.)

AN EVANGELICAL OBSERVES A WCC ASSEMBLY

By Clark Pinnock

From May 12-24 a conference on mission and evangelism was held by the World Council of Churches in Melbourne, Australia. It was the first of its kind since the controversial meetings in Bangkok in 1972 and I was privileged to attend as an invited guest and advisor.

About 600 attended, one half delegates from member churches, and the rest advisors like myself and newsmen who were often theologians in disguise. The atmosphere was festive, full of variety and color. Meeting on a university campus in a large Australian city, the conference was superbly organized and staffed, and met to discuss the general theme "Your Kingdom Come."

We were welcomed at the gate the first afternoon by none other than Carl McIntyre together with a small band of sign-toting conservatives warning us not to consort with spiritual darkness and political communism. As I shared with some of the demonstrators at the time, the situation was not quite as simple as that.

The opening papers sharpened the questions I brought with me. WCC general secretary Philip Potter traced the history of the ecumenical movement since Edinburgh in 1910, giving me the impression he saw only a growing resolve to carry out the Great Commission and not any going back on that commitment. Emilio Castro, director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC, added his voice, insisting that he and his department and the whole WCC movement were solidly behind proclamation evangelism, making the appeal indirectly to the evangelicals to join forces with them in forwarding the goal of reaching the whole world with the gospel. Then the German New Testament scholar Ernst Käsemann developed the theme of the coming of the Kingdom of God in terms of a struggle with the powers of this age, drawing upon apocalyptic biblical images to explain the role of the church in today's world.

Besides the plenary sessions, we met in small Bible study groups, led by such people as Krister Stendahl, John Yoder, and Orlando Costas, and in sections which examined with particular topics "Good News to the Poor," "The Kingdom of God and Human Struggles" and "The Crucified Christ Challenges Human Power" as well as in sub-sections which looked at aspects of these broader themes. The membership of the WCC has shifted away from any Western dominance in the direction of the fuller participation of Third World churches and this has meant a greater and greater concern for the issues of hunger, poverty, and human struggles in the ecumenical movement.

No one group really dominated the conference, but noticeably present was the Latin American delegation. The Latins brought with them the themes of liberation theology which dominate the thinking of the WCC these days, namely, a deep concern for poor and disenfranchised peoples, which sparked naturally enough a vigorous debate over the form in which this concern ought to be expressed and pursued. Some saw it in terms of a life and death struggle with the capitalist system. Others insisted that the gospel was good news and bad news to us all, and who called for a responsible society without indicating any essential ideological character to it. Between the two broad groups there were considerable tensions and mutual feelings which in the end were not completely resolved.

The Soviet delegates made no attempt to exploit the revolutionary fervor displayed by the Third World people. Only when a Pakistani delegate suggested the house condemn the Russian invasion of Afghanistan did they leap to their feet and race to the microphones to renounce any criticism of their policies there. There was little doubt in anyone's mind that it was a lot easier to criticize South Africa and the USA than any communist or newly "liberated" Third World region.

The charge of selective indignation on the part of the WCC certainly has some basis, but I do not think this is due to WCC politics as much as the realities of world politics today. Therefore the assembly passed a sensible motion which admitted how difficult it was to name specifically all the concerns Christians have and expressed sorrow over this. The motion was ably put by David Bosch from South Africa, an evangelical delegate who left a clear mark on the deliberations.

I myself participated in the section "Witnessing to the Kingdom" which produced a remarkably sound and biblical report on holistic evangelism. I was thrilled to hear the joyful testimony of Kimbanguist Bena-Silu of Zaire and the powerful challenge to conduct mass evangelism efforts throughout the world given by Methodist evangelist Allan Walker, and I was amazed to discover how much solid biblical content could be agreed to by a large assembly of very diverse Christians from around the world. Granted the sentiments were often vague and general and the wording was chosen to create the impression of unity. Nevertheless, central biblical truths were clearly enunciated and the call to evangelize the whole world definitely issued.

Leaving behind mere description, what lessons did I learn from the experience of Melbourne, 1980? First, I came away convinced of the value of such broad ecumenical gatherings. Carl McIntyre is wrong. Evangelicals need to engage in discussion with Christians from other parts of the church, if only for the sake of clarifying their own identity

And there are other benefits, too. Not least the occasion to come into contact with genuine faith and commitment among people we seldom meet in ordinary circumstances, and the opportunity to bear witness to the gospel as we understand it. The WCC needs, if I may say so, the evangelical witness. Certain biblical themes tend to get left out if evangelicals are not present. The tendency to interpret the gospel solely on the horizontal level and mission in terms only of social reconstruction has to be confronted and corrected. The WCC does tend to forget, without necessarily denying it, our Lord's command to spread the gospel among all nations, and we need to remind them of that.

Secondly, I came away with the impression that the WCC is a forum for Christian discussion and interaction and not a super-church dominated by politically left-wing liberals. Of course the forces of socialism and of modernism are present, too, but not wildly out of proportion and not in control in such a way that other views are suppressed and not heard. The Orthodox presence, for example affects the WCC tremendously in all areas, making it mandatory for example to formulate theological statements in a trinitarian structure and to respect the special dignity and calling of the church in the world. Evangelicals, too, are able to make themselves heard and influence significantly the course of events.

Third, did the Melbourne assembly do anything to bridge the gap between the approach taken at Bangkok and the Lausanne Covenant movement? Yes, I think it did, in a measure. The emphasis at Bangkok on human liberation was certainly present at Melbourne--but then again it had to be. It is