

# *Evangelicals in Search of Catholicity: Theological Reflections on Lausanne II*

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'Did Evangelicals join in with the peaceful revolution?'

'Well, those who are theologically conservative are also often politically conservative, aren't they?'

An American Evangelical, ex-Dean of the Asian Theological Seminary in Manila, and I were walking from our hotel to the conference centre. We were discussing the events of the 1986 bloodless revolution in the Philippines, when 2 million people came out on the streets of Manila. I continued the conversation:

'Some people say that Cardinal Sin may be a candidate for the papacy in the future.'

'That would be bad news.'

'Why?'

'Because he believes in Liberation Theology.'

'But if he had not thought through these issues of justice in the light of the gospels, would he have called the people out on the streets to feed and protect the rebels?'

'I suppose not.'

'And what would have happened to General Ramos and Defence Minister Enrile?'

'They would have been captured and killed.'

'Therefore no bloodless revolution, and no end to Marcos' rule?'

'I suppose not.'

'But surely, therefore, some Liberation Theology is good, isn't it?'

'I reckon that good can come out of the devil's works.'

The following Saturday David Lim, the young Filipino new Dean of the Asian Theological Seminary, showed some of us around that college and described a more holistic approach to God's mission and what it had been like on the streets.<sup>1</sup>

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1 See David Lim, *Transformation* Vol 5, No 2 April/June 1988.

The title of this article needs explaining. The main theme of Lausanne II was 'Calling the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world'. This emphasis on wholeness has been given the adjective 'holistic' in recent missiological thinking but the traditional theological term used for centuries has been the word 'catholic'.<sup>1</sup> Evangelicals are scared of that word (even with a small 'c') for obvious reasons; but perhaps we need to reclaim it, just as many Catholics are reclaiming the word 'evangelical'.

Lausanne I had taken place in Switzerland in the year I was converted at Oxford in 1974 and, as with many other people, the Lausanne Covenant has been an important influence in shaping my thinking on mission since then. I was, therefore, particularly grateful to be invited by CMS to attend Lausanne II in the Philippines in July 1989: I went from the context of the Diocese of Mount Kenya East, where I have been on the staff of their theological and development college since 1985.

Where was theology to be found at Lausanne II? Some bemoaned its absence, but I believe it was present in the Filipino context of recent liberation, their current poverty and affluence juxtaposed, in the plenary presentations, including videos and entertainment, in the seminars, in the global fellowship and informal discussions of people from about 170 nations and also in the Manila Manifesto (why was it not called the Manila Paper?). John Stott, who drafted the Covenant in 1974, was again a sign and a wonder – a sign of our unity and a wonder at drafting.<sup>2</sup>

In the following theological reflections I will concentrate on three themes – the evangel, eschatology and ecclesiology.

### **The Gospel of the Kingdom – and Perichoresis**

'Half gospels are like mules – they have neither pride of ancestry nor hope of posterity'. Peter Kuzmic, a Pentecostal Yugoslav theologian and chairman of the World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission, thus criticised evangelism that ignored socio-political responsibility. In an earlier paper, given at the Grand Rapids Consultation on Evangelism and Social Responsibility, he had observed:

Evangelicals seem to find it hard to think in dialectical terms and can hardly endure to live with unresolved questions and amidst tensions

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1 Bernard Thorogood has also made this point in his article in the *International Review of Mission*, January 89, 'Learning New Models for International Mission' p 79. Ironically, of all people, it was General Smuts who coined the word holistic! The Greek word *holos* is the equivalent of the latin *integer* and the phrase 'integral evangelism' has been popularized by the 1987 Stuttgart Statement on Evangelism and the book commenting on it, Vinay Samuel and Albrecht Hauser eds, *Proclaiming Christ in Christ's Way – Studies in Integral Evangelism*, Regnum, Oxford 1989.

2 The Manifesto is set out in full in the official paperback of the conference: Alan Nichol, *The Whole Gospel for the Whole World* Regal Books and Lausanne Committee, Ventura 1989.

... This may partly explain why conservative Christians have problems with the teaching of Jesus on the Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup>

Any discussion of the 'whole gospel' has to take Jesus's theology of the Kingdom of God seriously. The first draft of the Manifesto hardly mentioned the Kingdom, though this was somewhat corrected in the final version. The Kingdom which is both 'now and not yet' does not sacralize the present, by accepting the status quo, but is a constant divine disturbance of reality and a call to move ahead to God's future.

Lausanne II reiterated the Covenant's commitment to 'the whole gospel', although many at the conference were more happy with the concept of social compassion than political justice. It is encouraging that this has become Lausanne mainstream orthodoxy, stressing both word and deed, and is no longer marginal radicalism. At Manila there was no need for a separate 'Radical Discipleship' statement, as at Lausanne I, or 'Statement of Concerns' as at Pattaya in 1980.

It is good to see that the theme of 'good news to the poor' is included in the very definition of the gospel, in the second section of the Manifesto headed 'Good News For Today', rather than left to the section on social responsibility. This second section had been heavily amended and the tension in the redrafting committee may be reflected in the following sad change from the draft:

We determine to make the needy peoples of the world our mission priority and like Jesus 'preach good news to the poor' by word and deed. (first draft)

We determine to follow Jesus in preaching good news to all people by word and deed. (final version)

In this diocese of Mount Kenya East the local proverb 'a hungry stomach has no ears' has led to integral evangelism. During the Easter vacation this year I travelled around the arid and semi-arid north of the diocese with Boniface Ntunene, one of our third year students. He is from the Rendille tribe near Marsabit and later this year will be their first ever ordained minister. I saw pioneer evangelism and development going on hand in hand and leading to phenomenal growth. Communion tables become development desks after services and wind-pumped bore holes provide living water next to new churches. The Rendille people at Kargi, in the desert west of Marsabit, first heard the gospel in 1986 and asked the Kenyan evangelists if the Jesus they talked about could help them with their chronic water shortage. The reply was 'yes' and so the Rendille prayed and then dug - where they had prayed - and they found water. They called the well the 'Jesus Well' and to all those who came for water the name was fully

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1 Peter Kuzmic, 'History and Eschatology: Evangelical Views' in Bruce Nicholls ed, *In Word and Deed*, Paternoster, Exeter 1985, p 148.

explained. The following year many of them were baptised with the water that had answered their prayers!<sup>1</sup>

At Lausanne the theme of justice was powerfully presented by Caesar Molebatsi from South Africa and also by Senator Jovito Salonga, President of the Filipino Senate, during his greetings. Affirmation 9 of the Manifesto reads:

We affirm that the proclamation of God's kingdom of justice and peace demands the denunciation of all injustice and oppression, both personal and structural; we will not shrink from this prophetic witness.

In this diocese the excuse 'you can't change the world, that's just the way it is' becomes the crucial question 'Is it just, the way it is?' and leads to episcopal action – and suffering.

At around midnight on Saturday 22 April 1989, Bishop David Gitari's house was attacked by thugs. They cut the telephone wire, smashed his bedroom window and shouted out that they had come to kill him. While they dug out the heavy security grilles with axes, the Bishop, his wife and eldest son ran upstairs to the balcony and onto the roof. Eventually neighbours came to the rescue with shouts and farming tools and the thugs ran away. Bishop Gitari has regularly spoken out against rigging in elections and other corruption. The morning after the attack he preached without notes, at a confirmation service in Embu Cathedral, on 2 Timothy 1:7 'God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, love and self control'.<sup>2</sup>

But justice is a slippery word and not all at Manila were happy with the theme or interpreted it biblically. Susan Perlman, an official Lausanne observer at the WCC's Commission for World Mission and Evangelism conference at San Antonio, in an article on that conference, reduces justice in society to simple lifestyle and integrity in individual Christians:

The evangelical understanding of social justice is that redeemed people with renewed hearts should not be motivated by greed, but should require less for themselves according to Christ's example.<sup>3</sup>

Luis Palau gave a presentation that seemed uncomfortably close to the sort of pietism criticized by the late Orlando Costas, which preaches 'a conscience soothing Jesus, with an unscandalous cross, an otherworldly

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- 1 For further details see David Gitari, 'Evangelisation and Culture: Primary Evangelism in Northern Kenya' pp 101-121 in op. cit., Samuel and Hauser eds. This was his paper that was read at the Lambeth Conference 1988 and CMS have just published a 14 minute video *To Canterbury with a Camel* which illustrates his paper with shots of this diocese including the 'Jesus Well'.
  - 2 David Gitari, *Let the Bishop Speak*, Uzima, Nairobi 1988, is a book of expository sermons on social justice.
  - 3 Susan Perlman, 'An Evangelical Perspective on the San Antonio Conference', *International Review of Mission*, January 1990, p 7.

kingdom, a private, inwardly limited spirit, a pocket God, a spiritualized Bible, and an escapist Church.<sup>1</sup> His talk ignited a lively lunchtime discussion. On the table I was at there were three South Africans, a black pastor, a coloured woman church worker and a white suffragan bishop. There were also some Americans. I suggested we earthed that sort of theology in a particular context to weigh its merits, since contextless theology, left in the air, is difficult to evaluate. 'In South Africa' I asked 'that sort of preaching is good news to whom?' and the answer from all three South Africans was 'the white Government'. 'And in the Philippines before 1986?' The answer came from an American, 'Marcos.'

But what about the question of 'primacy'? This is not an ARCIC question concerning a 'universal primate' (the phrase still has a strange Darwinian ring to me) but an evangelical shibboleth concerning the primacy of evangelism over social responsibility. The phrase in the Lausanne Covenant 'In the church's mission of sacrificial service, evangelism is primary' (article 6) has been defended by John Stott and others on the grounds that 'evangelism relates to people's eternal destiny'. While conceding that the choice between social responsibility and evangelism is 'largely conceptual' the Grand Rapids report still states:

Nevertheless, if we must choose, then we have to say that a person's eternal, spiritual salvation is of greater importance than his or her temporal and material well-being.<sup>2</sup>

The Manifesto, in a strange *non sequitur*, also gives a curious defence of the indefensible, thereby reducing the gospel to a cerebral concept, which is narrower than the definition in Section 2:

Evangelism is primary because our chief concern is with the gospel. (Section 4)

Our chief concern, like Jesus's, should surely be with the gospel of the Kingdom which sees and makes things whole and in which evangelism and social involvement, though different, are so intimately intertwined that it is futile to try to unravel them, and prioritize them. The holistic gospel of the Kingdom does not get tied up in post-enlightenment dualist knots, trying to answer unnecessary questions. The Grand Rapids report itself gives a good model of unity between these two which in effect undermines the concept of primacy:

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- 1 Orlando Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate—Mission Beyond Christendom*, Orbis, New York 1982, p 80.
  - 2 Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and the World Evangelical Fellowship, *Evangelism and Social Responsibility—an Evangelical Commitment*, Paternoster, Exeter 1982 p 25.

For the Gospel is the root, of which both evangelism and social responsibility are the fruits.<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes choices do have to be made, but each according to its context. In 1986 Bishop Gitari had been invited to be the Anglican Chaplain at the Commonwealth Games in Scotland. He had also prepared six scripts for the epilogue programme on Scottish television. Then came the boycott of the Games from the African countries (including Kenya) as a protest against apartheid. Should the evangelistic opportunities of the chaplaincy and the TV programmes have primacy, because of eternal destiny, or should the justice of the protest have priority? After much prayer and consultation he decided not to go and the subsequent events showed the wisdom of this – for in the recent Church/State debates his going would have been used against him.

What of the implication that evangelism is eternally relevant while social responsibility has mere temporal relevance? Surely our prayer, following the Master's, 'Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' and our whole life in response to that are of *eternal* importance. The following doctrines bear witness to continuity, as well as discontinuity, in the world to come: after all *Gratia non tollit sed reparat naturam*:

- Creation and Re-creation. The universe is going to experience a rebirth (Matthew 19:28) for God is going to re-create it, not create another universe *ex nihilo* (cp also Romans 8:18-25 with Mark 13:8).
- Incarnation. This is very different from theophany, a mere passing manifestation of God, for Jesus' humanity was not shed at the resurrection but glorified and is eternal. John Gladwin's perceptive criticism of Edward Norman's 1978 Reith Lectures focussed on this difference.<sup>2</sup>
- Ministry. The parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) followed by the parable of the sheep and the goats (vv 31-45) and Paul's parable of the building (1 Cor. 3:14-15) all imply the eternal significance of our actions.
- Heaven. The following neglected verses in Revelation speak powerfully, in figurative language, about a cultural continuity between present and future in the new Jerusalem:

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1 Ibid. p 28. John Stott specifically commends this as 'a better – because more organic – image' than the previously listed three relationships, namely that social activity is a consequence of, a bridge to, and a partner with evangelism. John Stott. 'A Note about the Stuttgart Statement on Evangelism', in op. cit. Samuel and Hauser eds, p 209.

2 John Gladwin 'The Reith Lectures: some confusions and dilemmas' *Churchman* 1979, No 3, pp 225-233 cp. Scott Holland's comment 'The more you believe in the Incarnation the more you care about drains' (cited in Martin Jarrett-Kerr, 'Scott Holland: drains and the Incarnation', *The Times*, 5 Feb 1983).

By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut by day – and there shall be no light there; they shall bring into it the glory and honour of the nations.

George Caird has commented on the theology of the book of Revelation: 'John never allows his readers to forget that earthly conduct matters and matters eternally.'<sup>1</sup>

So, having rejected talk of primacy as unrealistic dualism, is there a model for a better illustration of the relationship between evangelism of social responsibility? I believe the trinitarian doctrine of 'perichoresis' or 'co-inherence' has much to offer when we refer it to the new context of mission.

John of Damascus (c 675-749 AD) developed this idea of mutual interpenetration in the Trinity from Johannine theology and from Basil of Caesarea.<sup>2</sup> Recently, Jürgen Moltmann has stressed its importance in providing the unity in his 'social' understanding of the Trinity:

The doctrine of perichoresis links together in a brilliant way the threeness and the unity, without reducing the threeness to unity, or dissolving the unity in the threeness. The unity of the tri-unity lies in the eternal perichoresis of the trinitarian persons.

If the divine life is understood perichoretically, then it cannot be consummated by merely one subject at all. It is bound to consist of the living fellowship of the three Persons who are related to one another and exist in One another.<sup>3</sup>

When we consider mission 'perichoretically' we see three important consequences. First, that evangelism and social responsibility are not totally separate or even parallel aspects but actually coinhere; secondly that primacy is irrelevant. Moltmann continues:

Through the concept of perichoresis, all subordinationism in the doctrine of the Trinity is avoided . . . Here the three Persons are equal; they live and are manifested in one another and through one another.<sup>4</sup>

The so called Athanasian Creed states 'None is afore or after the other, none is greater than the other.' Thirdly, social responsibility and evangelism glorify each other. Moltmann maintains that the Trinitarian Persons bring one another mutually to manifestation in the divine glory:

1 George Caird, *The Book of Revelation*, A. & C. Black, London 1966, p 297.

2 John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, Migne, Patrologia Graeca, Paris, 94, 789-1228. His book is a digest of Christian doctrine as expounded by the Greek Fathers.

3 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, SCM, London 1981, pp 175.

4 *ibid.* pp 175-6.

The Persons of the Trinity make one another shine through that glory, mutually and together. They glow into perfect form through one another and awake to perfected beauty in one another.<sup>1</sup>

From the eternal internal aspects of the Trinity to our local basic food at Kabare is a big jump – but food is sacramental and we have our own parable of coinherence in mission. Maize and beans are the staple diet here in the fertile foothills of Mount Kenya. They are planted, grow up and are eaten together. They are planted together in alternate rows, for they work together ecologically: beans put nitrogen into the soil and maize takes it out. When they are harvested the food *mataha* is prepared – they are cooked and then mashed together with potatoes and greens. He who has food to eat, let him eat.

### Eschatology – It is always soon

A Kikuyu proverb runs:

Do not perform the rain dance for welcoming the rain before preparing the ground for digging and planting.

There was a lot of talk, and a full plenary session, about the year AD 2000 and since the major slogan of the conference was 'Proclaim Christ Till He Comes' there was also inevitably some confusion. An advert in the *AD 2000 Monitor* for Jay and Olgy Gary's book *The Countdown Has Begun* asked 'Has the time clock of the ages been reset in the light of AD 2000?' Talk of a 'decade of evangelism' (with its emphasis on process) is more healthy than a focus on a particular date (with its misunderstandings of the end of the world). In fact the first draft of the present Section 11 of the Manifesto had been headed 'The Challenge of the 21st Century', which shifted the emphasis from the blessed date: there seems to have been considerable pressure for amending the heading and it is now 'The Challenge of AD 2000 and Beyond'.

Whenever AD 2000 was mentioned there had to be disclaimers – 'it is not a magical number', 'we are not being superstitious', 'we are not setting a date for the rapture or the return of Christ' etc. But these actually draw attention to the fact that many people are seeing AD 2000 in these terms. Robert Coote, of the Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, comments in his article on Lausanne II:

Ralph Winter, in his 1986 review of United States Protestant Missionary history, repeatedly connects the call for the completion of world evangelization with the end of history: 'Can we believe that we are now on a new, final threshold leading to the End of History in the year 2000?'<sup>2</sup>

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1 *ibid.* p 176.

2 Robert Coote, 'Lausanne II and World Evangelization', *The International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Jan 1990. Ralph Winter, 'The Student Volunteers of 1886, Their Heirs, and the Year 2000,' *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 2 no 2, p 173.



The favourite story of the 'Bring Back the King' movement amongst American dispensationalists was quoted in the final session; Leighton Ford, the Chairman of the conference, was preaching on the second coming of Christ from 2 Peter 3:8-14.<sup>1</sup> A young farmer wanted to bring back his sporting hero and was told to build a playing field – 'if you build, he will come.' He then quoted the saying of Jesus that the gospel will be preached to all nations and then the end will come. However he did turn the saying in the story round to form a challenging question 'if he is coming will you build?'

John Mott's phrase in the first part of the century 'Evangelize to a finish and bring back the King' has been picked up again with new emphasis but it is being used in a pelagian way as a new motive for world evangelization. On top of obedience to and love for Christ, the love for lost people, the desire for the greater glory of God, a questionable motive has been added – get the job done by the year AD 2000 so that Christ can return.<sup>2</sup> But who is in control of history? I believe in the personal return of Christ and also in the usefulness of setting attainable<sup>3</sup> goals in strategy planning but we do not cause the former by achieving the latter. It is unbiblical and superstitious to expect a particular date for the return of Christ and it is presumptuous and precocious to plan it for the Father.

The Manifesto does not make such mistakes ('there is nothing magical about the date') and nor did most plenary speakers but it seems to me from discussions that many people are expecting something extraordinary to happen in AD 2000. The rightful urgency of our task should not lead us into unrighteous hurry, which is usually incompatible with incarnational, integral evangelism in which patience is a virtue. Another Kikuyu proverb may be relevant: 'That which is quickly acquired is quickly lost'.

But what about the (sometimes) added words 'and beyond'. 'Let's evangelize the world by the year AD 2000 and beyond' was mentioned several times. The justifiable fear of date setting for the parousia has led to grammatical nonsense! Robert Coote comments:

- 1 Leighton Ford, the Chairman of the conference, never gave the biblical context of this phrase which comes from 1 Cor. 11:26, nor did anyone else. In that chapter the proclamation is nonverbal and eucharistic and the context includes injustice in the Church.
- 2 This is not a new motive. Robert Coote comments: 'Anyone who even casually peruses the history of the evangelical missionary motivation knows that the hope of 'hastening' the return of the Lord has played a central role since the final decades of the last century.
- 3 David Barrett's figures predict that in spite of the rise in the number of 'world evangelization plans' from 680 in 1988 to 850 in 1989 (and a predicted 1400 by the end of the century) the number of 'unevangelized' as a percentage of the world population at the year AD 2000 will remain the same at 16%! Compare his 'Status of Global Mission' articles in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January 1988 and January 1989.

This is like asking the Xerox service department if they can have your machine fixed by Friday and beyond.<sup>1</sup>

Stephen Neill has described how the year AD 1000 was 'marked by widespread fear and anxiety throughout almost every part of the Christian world.' He continues:

The end would be announced by fearful calamities, and then the last and terrifying judgement would begin. In point of fact, nothing much happened; and the history of the world seemed set to continue for an indefinite number of years.<sup>2</sup>

There is a widespread desire in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement to complete world evangelization by AD 2000 in order to 'present Jesus with his 2000th birthday present'. However, our years AD are based on the calculations of Dionysius Exiguus of 6th century,<sup>3</sup> which we now know to be inaccurate. We do not know for certain the year of the birth of Christ, but it must have been before 4 BC when we know King Herod died. Therefore the real double millenium may be sooner than we think. Should we, after all, be aiming at AD 1996?

This is not idle theological tilting, for eschatology affects mission and ethics. Peter Kuzmic believes that contemporary evangelicalism is still predominantly premillennialist<sup>4</sup> and adds, Premillennialism's underlying philosophy of history has almost inevitable negative consequences for Christian social responsibility.<sup>5</sup>

It seems to me that the key text linking evangelism and eschatology (Mt. 24:14) is often misquoted. The words in italics are usually omitted:

'And *this gospel of the kingdom* will be preached throughout the world, as a testimony to all nations: and then the end will come.'

Eduard Schweizer has commented on the importance of the words in italics:

Only now does Matthew insert the statement about the preaching of the gospel from Mark 13:10, while altering it so as to guarantee that the reference to Jesus' preaching of love for one's neighbour will be noted. . . . That this preaching will be a 'witness to all nations' before the end comes should probably be taken in the sense of 25:31ff: love for one's neighbour must be preached to all nations, for love is the standard by which they will one day be judged.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Robert Coote, op. cit., p 15.

2 Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, Penguin, London 1964, p 99.

3 *ibid.* p 99 note 1.

4 Hal Lindsey has popularised premillennialism with over 30 million copies of his books sold (eg *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids 1970). These books serve as a religious substitute for astrology.

5 Peter Kuzmic, op. cit., p 142.

6 Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, SPCK, London 1986, p 452.

Peter Kuzmic continues his critique:

Constant preoccupation with apocalypticism tends to show up in evangelical theology in attempts to de-eschatologize history and or de-historicize eschatology. Such a distortion of biblical truth makes it almost impossible to relate eschatology and ethics.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps C. S. Lewis has the most profound touch in his Narnia myth. Near the end of one of the books Lucy asked Aslan when they will see him again. Aslan replied 'Soon'.

'When is soon?' asked Lucy.

'It is always soon'.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Whole Church – Growth or Obesity?**

Another Kikuyu proverb runs, 'One peg is not enough to stretch a hide'.

Lausanne II stressed unity – or in Lausanne speak, since any organic unity is considered meaningless, 'co-operation'. Cautious words are included in the Manifesto about the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches and the WCC. Another section stresses the role of the laity and particularly of women. However, with the main emphasis on the local church, the cosmic glory of the universal church of Ephesians and Colossians, both in space and time, both in heaven and on earth, was missing from the plenaries and from the Manifesto.

What was meant by the local church? The word 'local' seems to me to be in distinction to trans-national parachurches, which too often act similarly to secular trans-national corporations. The Manifesto states that the local church rightly 'bears a primary responsibility for the spread of the Gospel' however, in amending the first draft, the office of the parachurch agencies has been magnified. This is not really surprising considering that the Lausanne Committee itself is a parachurch organisation. Consider the changes in the following:

the parachurch organisation is a servant of the church, while the church can benefit from its specialist advice. (draft)

such agencies are part of the Body of Christ, and have valuable specialist expertise from which the church can greatly benefit. (final version)

The mention of 'missionary paternalism' in the previous section (No 7) could have been expanded here. It is the only hint of the issues behind the moratorium debate of the 1970's. But this paternalism was present

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1 Op. cit., p 155.

2 From memory!

throughout the structures of the conference.<sup>1</sup> Leighton Ford said in his opening address that we hear no more talk of moratorium these days but it all depends who is listening to whom! Many forget that there is an echo of the debate in the Covenant itself:

A reduction of foreign missionaries and money in an evangelized country may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church's growth in self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelized areas. (Article 7)

On this issue, Raymond Fung's *Monthly Newsletters on Evangelism* from the WCC, August '85 to May '86, are very enlightening. To ignite a global reflection on world evangelization he republished Donald McGavran's article 'Giant Step in Christian Mission' which called for a massive rise in American missionaries and new mission agencies concentrating on evangelism (alone) amongst 'unreached peoples'. Then, in later newsletters he printed extracts from many missiologists around the world debating that article. His final extract was from Simon Barrington-Ward, at that time General Secretary of CMS:

Today the most effective missionaries are those who can demonstrate in their whole person, being and style that the Gospel is not a western affair, contrary to the firm belief of most Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and many of the African intelligentsia. We in CMS would only be too glad to join in with prayer, with money and with people in a World Church initiative led by African, Asian and South American church leaders. I have received strong negative impressions of the impact of certain kinds of 'go it alone' North American initiatives, often aggressive, insensitive and uncoordinated in the very areas and among the very people we would hope to 'reach'. Such initiatives make the ultimate task harder.<sup>2</sup>

With all our talk of cooperation and unity, there is still the fundamental problem of the 'people groups approach' which in effect aims to set up monocultural, monoethnic local churches, ie separate development. The Lausanne sponsored consultation in June 1977 at Pasadena, which discussed this 'Homogeneous Unit Principle'<sup>3</sup>, seems to have been forgotten. This principle of ecclesiastical apartheid has rightly come under heavy theological attack from evangelical mission theologians including David Bosch

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1 There were 1188 participants from the USA out of a total of 4297. Of all the mass of statistics presented, the number of participants per country was never published. This figure comes from an internal document headed 'Countries Represented at Lausanne II With Number of Participants.' We await the official statistics in the conference hardback book. Is the Lausanne Movement a three self movement? – self appointed, self perpetuating and self accountable! See the discussion in *Transformation*, January/March 1987 between Morgan Derham, David Howard and Leighton Ford.

2 Raymond Fung, *Monthly Newsletter on Evangelism*, WCC, March 1986 p 10.

3 Lausanne Paper 1, *Church Planting – the Homogeneous Unit*, Scripture Union, London 1978.

from the context of South Africa<sup>1</sup>, and Rene Padilla from the context of Argentina<sup>2</sup>, but many in Lausanne still seem hooked on the concept, even though it may not be officially stated.

If the apostle Peter had done a course under Donald McGavran or Peter Wagner he could have easily stood up to Paul at Antioch (Galatians 2:11f.) and said 'Your theological talk of the crucial unity between Jews and Gentiles is OK but let's have that spiritual unity in two separate churches in Antioch, then we will reach more Jews and more Gentiles, won't we?' The apostle Paul in reply perhaps would have used even stronger language than he does in Galatians!

Donald McGavran's 'rediscovery' of German missiologists such as Christian Keysser has been important for his basic principle. David Bosch has written:

German missiology in general, and Keysser in particular, with their concept of an 'ethnic church' had great influence on the Dutch Reformed Church's policy of constituting racially separated churches in South Africa. In fact it can be argued that they provided a great deal of the theological justification for this policy.<sup>3</sup>

Donald McGavran has written that racial prejudice 'can be understood and should be made an aid to christianization.'<sup>4</sup> Peter Wagner entitled one of his books *Our Kind of People – the Ethical Dimension of Church Growth in America*.<sup>5</sup> In response to this, we need to hear the following observations. George Caird comments on Luke 14:1-14:

It is a common human characteristic to cultivate the society only of one's own kind, but the Pharisees had elevated this tendency into a spiritual principle, refusing all social contact with those who did not share their standards of piety.<sup>6</sup>

Jürgen Moltmann comments on the Church:

The Church of the crucified Christ cannot consist of an assembly of like persons who mutually affirm each other, but must be constituted of unlike persons. 'Like seeks after like' as Aristotle says in his discussion of friendship (Ethics Book VIII). But for the crucified Christ, the principle of fellowship is fellowship with those who are different, and

1 David Bosch, 'The Structure of Mission: an exposition of Matthew 28: 16-20' in Wilbert Shenk ed., *Exploring Church Growth*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1983, pp 218-248.

2 Rene Padilla, 'The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle' in Wilbert Shenk ed. *ibid.* pp 2w85-303, also reprinted in Rene Padilla, *Mission Between The Times*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1985, pp 142-169.

3 David Bosch's response in Raymond Fung's *Monthly Newsletter on Evangelism* October/November 1985, p 7 in the debate mentioned above.

4 Donald McGavran, *The Bridges of God: a Study in the Strategy of Missions*, World Dominion Press, London 1955, p 10.

5 Peter Wagner, *Our Kind of People – The Ethical Dimension of Church Growth in America*, John Knox Press, 1979.

6 George Caird, *Saint Luke*, Penguin, London 1963, p 28.

solidarity with those who have become alien and have been made different.<sup>1</sup>

In developing plans for world evangelization, strategy must not triumph over theology, for the unity of the Church is an integral part of its witness. If it is not, the result may be fatness rather than growth. The ultimate question is not whether something is useful but whether it is true.

### Conclusion

This final Kikuyu proverb is important for incarnational evangelism:

The home is only well understood by the person who sleeps there, but not by the early morning visitor.

As we continue our search for wholeness and 'catholicity' I pray that in our world wide calling we will be committed to:

Evangelism rather than propaganda,  
Compassion rather than sentimentality,  
Justice rather than indifference,  
Unity rather than uniformity,  
Urgency rather than hurry,  
Patience rather than complacency,  
Assurance rather than presumption,  
Hope rather than optimism.

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1 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, SCM, London 1974, p 28.