Mission in the Oikoumène

Oikoumène, a term used in the New Testament and the origin of our word “ecumenical,” means the inhabited world. It has special significance for Christian mission because the gospel is to be preached in the whole oikoumène (Matt. 24:14), and because it is the oikoumène itself that the earliest missionaries were accused of turning upside down (Acts 17:6). The inhabited world is now much larger and vastly more complex than in apostolic times. Yet the mandate to proclaim the gospel in every part of it remains unchanged, and authentic mission is still a disruptive force wherever oppression and evil exist.

The oikoumène transcends ecclesiastical boundaries. “The Legacy of Pierre Charles, S.J.,” fourth in the Occasional Bulletin’s series of tributes to great missiologists of this century, is written by his fellow Jesuit and former student Joseph Masson, but it speaks to us all. Charles was an initiator of new and original ideas in Roman Catholic missionary thought. Although he died twenty-five years ago, his prophetic insights are reflected in the most progressive documents of Vatican Council II.

A rich variety of social groupings compose the oikoumène. In this issue we resume an examination of the homogeneous unit principle in church growth (see also the article by C. Peter Wagner, published in this journal in January 1978). Charles H. Kraft, a cultural anthropologist, focuses on those aspects of the controversial subject in which anthropological insights can be especially useful.

From biblical, ecumenical, and feminist perspectives, Letty M. Russell here develops the thesis that liberation and evangelization are closely related. Women comprise a little over half the oikoumène—and considerably more than half of the missionaries who have taken the gospel to its farthest corners.

The article by Noboru Iwamura, a Japanese medical missionary to Nepal, witnesses to the fact that Christians of the Third World are not only involved in mission but are among the most creative voices in missiology today.

Norman A. Horner reports on his memorable visit to a remote section of eastern Turkey. Syriac, a language closely akin to the one spoken by Jesus himself, is still the daily medium of communication in that historic center of Syrian Orthodoxy. For Christians living there, the immediate objective of mission is to survive the forces that threaten their way of life and steadily erode their numbers.

While still concerned with racist oppression, Gayraud S. Wilmore observes that recent statements and activities of Black theologians “seem to point in the direction of a less exclusive, introspective obsession with the American race problem than was characteristic of the earliest development of Black Theology.”

Index Coming
Enclosed with the January 1979 issue of the Occasional Bulletin will be an index to volume I (1977) and volume II (1978), to facilitate reference and research by scholars using this journal. We are gratified that more than 6,000 new subscribers—including 1,000 outside North America—have been added to our circulation in the past year.

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156 Book Notes
Pierre Charles was born in Brussels on July 3, 1883. He became a Jesuit on September 23, 1899, and was ordained to the priesthood on August 24, 1910. He died at Louvain, the principal and final scene of his activities, on February 11, 1954.

Father Charles was of medium height, but solidly built and with broad shoulders. Throughout his entire life, and especially during the years of his priestly life, he rose before dawn and retired late at night, devoting all his time to study, prayer, and human associations. His understanding of the needs of both church and world grew within the context of wide scholarship, served by a prodigious memory and supported by a quick and subtle intelligence. He was a man who looked intently at people and things from under large, bushy eyebrows and through thick eyeglasses. That, however, was his only myopia.

One who attempts to sketch the main characteristics of Pierre Charles's personality should begin by noting the expansiveness of his outlook and of his intellectual and religious horizons. He was wondrously interested in the world. Chesterton would have called him a "man alive," and indeed he shared some of Chesterton's own humorous and paradoxical nature. Born in a small country, he relished every opportunity throughout his life to travel beyond its borders.

"One of his fundamental characteristics was a strong attachment to the essentials, mixed with freedom of thought."

The excitement of Pierre Charles about the missionary activities of his Belgian Jesuit mentors on the Zambezi dates to his high school days. From the beginning of his religious training he went beyond a perfunctory devotional life, combining the force of "catholic" doctrine and an interest in "worldly" realities into one and the same vigorous piety. His superiors contributed intelligently to that broad development by sending him to study philosophy with the German Jesuits who were then residing in Holland, and later to study theology with French Jesuits who were at that time refugees at Hastings in England (1907–1910).

The period of his religious formation was a time troubled by the problems of modernism, the synthesis of reason and revelation, science and faith, the Christ of faith and the historical Jesus, God and humankind, and so forth. Father Charles, a man of vigorous mind as well as a faithful Christian, found the discussions about such matters an opportunity to deepen his own intellectual and spiritual life. One of his fundamental characteristics was a strong attachment to the essentials, mixed with freedom of thought. "Safe" people, he would say, are those who do not have ideas of their own. As for him, he was teeming with ideas; he verified and enriched them in Paris where he came into contact with widely contrasting viewpoints such as those found in the thought of Kant and Bergson. Later on, in America, Africa, India, and Ceylon, his hunger for human associations and experiences continued unabated. Thus his exceedingly open and well-informed mind was firmly established. He was, moreover, remarkably multilingual, mastering English, German, Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian in addition to French, Latin, and Greek.

Pierre Charles remained a faithful priest, and his concept of the priestly and apostolic life was heightened and broadened amid all these influences. Those who want to have an account of it, without spending the time necessary to examine his course notes in detail, will do well to read some of his hundred meditations given in La Priere de Toutes les Heures, of which more than 100,000 copies were printed, and others from La Priere de Toutes les Choses. Those titles are significant in themselves, introducing us to a second characteristic of Father Charles's personality.

For want of a better term, we may call it a mentality of incarnation. To so vital a man, religion, that is to say Christian faith and life, cannot be reduced to a simple compartment of existence, limited in time, space, and purposes. In each and every person, Christian and non-Christian alike, and in the entire cosmos, it is something experienced and wrought by grace. He wrote, "The earth is the only road by which we are led to heaven." For him all land is Holy Land, all history Sacred History—if not already in fact, at least in hope and potential. All humanity waits to become the people of God; the church is designed to take the world upon itself in its ascent.

Teilhardism before Teilhard? Yes and no. Around 1920, Pierre Charles had indeed expressed his opinion precisely on the manuscript of Le Milieu Divin. He evaluated it favorably, but added some comments of his own. In effect, despite his optimism, the reality of sin in a humanity that is incapable of redeeming itself, and the need for a Redeemer who (as Ad Gentes puts it) "cleanses, assumes and uplifts" the whole of creation, both human and subhuman, had always been clear to him. An indication of that conviction can be seen in the first proposition of a theological treatise on "The Incarnation of the Word," which he completed only fifteen days before his death and which is one of his most brilliant contributions. He says in it: "The object of the first divine decree was Christ as the head of the universe; the

* All Catholic historical works on missiological theory, up to the present, cite Pierre Charles, either to approve or to challenge. Some bits of information prior to 1955 are found in Bibliografia Missionaria, published annually in Rome. We learn, for example, that La Priere Missionnaire was again translated into Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese after the death of the author. Many articles were republished in different languages even without the knowledge of the author who, as a matter of fact, was little concerned about what was done with his works.
Incarnation would not have taken place if man had not sinned.”

In his view of the world as a whole, he saw the richness of its spiritual character just as clearly as the lacunas. He also saw its absolute need of Christ—and the need for Christians, those who have received him, to bring this Christ to others.

If I am not mistaken, Pierre Charles’s intense preoccupation with and activity on behalf of the missions grew out of all that has been described above: a deep and robust faith; an “appetite” for associations with people; a progressively wider international experience; a Christian view of the riches, needs, and aspirations of humanity as a whole; an almost prophetic eagerness to see the church become truly universal, rooted in all the world’s diversity and cultural pluralism, as soon as possible.

Twenty-five years ago, in 1953, he wrote: “The mission is the bearer not only of doctrine and the means to eternal salvation, but also of a ‘way of life.’ This culture can and should reflect all the varieties to which its adaptation leads in the different human societies it penetrates” (“Mission et Acculturation,” in Nouvelle Revue Théologique, 1953, p. 27). In substance, therefore, he was already contending for what, in today’s terminology, we call incarnation, contextualization, and so forth.

Father Charles was, alas, too much in demand from all quarters and too incapable of refusing such requests, to have enough time left for minutely shaping his theological and missiological intuitions. By temperament, moreover, he was primarily an initiator of new and original ideas. He had a fondness for the research method of St. Thomas Aquinas in which one replies to whatever affirmation is made by saying: “It seems not to be so (videtur quod non).” It is an approach that irritates many orderly thinkers but, if applied to the hundreds of theological concepts that enjoy perfunctory acceptance, it can lead to often decisive refinements or insights. I may note in passing that the novel effects of this method were especially pleasing to the youthful audiences of religious and lay people whom the professor frequently addressed both in the line of duty and for his own enjoyment.

At the end of one of his meditations, Pierre Charles noted: “We have many professors, but what the world needs is seers!” Beginning in 1923–1924, after World War I and during the awakening of Asia and Africa, Father Charles developed the great issues now taken for granted but then much debated. These were discussed in lectures and in the Semaines de Missiologie that he directed at Louvain until 1950: the value of non-Christian cultures and religions; the spiritual competence of non-Christians, even the “primitives” as they were called; the missionary vocation of every Christian as a member of the body of Christ in growth toward its fullness; the need to have communities and local churches living in their own cultures and entrusted to local pastors; the role of the laity (in this matter he did not hesitate to use Protestant examples); and the advancement of women.

As a typical example of this “foresight,” much ahead of its time in the Roman Church at least, he advocated—as early as 1933—the reestablishment of a permanent diaconate in the church. When objections were raised on the grounds that it was contrary to canon law, his reply seemed almost “blasphemous” in those days: Then let the canon law be changed if that is what it takes!

Readers may ask what all the foregoing details have to do with a theology of mission. The answer is that they are enormously relevant, assuming that theology is not an intellectual game but a way of conceiving and living Christianity as leaven in the world. Those who knew Father Charles personally (and I had that privilege) can only smile or lose patience when intellectually myopic commentators interpret his favorite expression, the planting of the church, as a “juridical” theory. It is, on the contrary, the liveliest and most dynamic of expressions, and it comes to us from long ago.

The Old Testament refers more than once to the people of God as a vine that their Lord plants or uproots. The same idea is reflected in The Ascension of Isaiah (iii:3), a very old Hebrew document subject to Christian interpolations: “They will molest the planting that the apostles have planted.” Jesus himself uses the words tree and vine in reference to the church; Paul employs the figure of the olive tree (Rom. 11:17, 24); Irenaeus, in Adv. Haer. (v:20, 22), has this phrase: “plantata est Ecclesia paradisi in hoc mundo”; and the Roman Breviary says that the apostles planted the church with their blood (not with laws—even those unquestionably legislated, beginning with the Council of Jerusalem).

For Pierre Charles, planting means a vital insertion into the human matrix, into a sociocultural whole, in such a way that the whole of the gospel and of the church enters the whole life of a people. And the process is reciprocal. Father Charles underscored two aspects: mission does it, and mission should do it.

“The missionary activity of the Church is not at all identical with the [eventual] total conversion of a country; it involves not only religious and moral preaching, but the whole social and even material task: teaching, bricks and mortar, charitable works, professional services, and relief” (from the course given in Rome between 1932 and 1938). So much for the deed.
And now for the duty. It is based at the same time on a theology of the Redeemer and of those to be redeemed. "The Church is the divine form of the world, the only point of encounter by which the entire work of the Creator turns to the Redeemer; the only junction point in which the Redeemer himself enters into possession of his universal heritage" (from his course in Rome).

Further, "the Church accepts us as we are, and not as pure spirits" (Prêtre Missionnaire, p. 8). "It is not merely with souls that the Church is concerned; it is the equilibrium of the world as a whole and its eternal value that it conserves and consecrates" (Études Missiologiques, p. 37). Thus "the sanctification of the world is not only spiritual but also a very material task. Wherever the Church is propagated it should, by reason of its very structure and nature, promote the benefits of health, knowledge, social peace, decent life and holy joy, both for its own members and for those who are not yet members. Those responsibilities are not all outside the function of church planting but are very much included in it" (from his course in Rome).

Thus the goal is envisaged as "When the Church has become solidly established throughout the world, with her clergy locally recruited, her sacraments within reach of all sincere people of good will, her preaching available to all who are not willfully deaf, her laity disciplined and busy, her congregations both active and passive, the entire work of the Creator turns to the Redeemer; the Church is the divine form of the world, the only point of encounter by which the entire work of the Creator turns to the Redeemer; the only junction point in which the Redeemer himself enters into possession of his universal heritage" (from his course in Rome).

The major testimony to the lasting value of Pierre Charles's great contributions is, however, much more eloquent. It is seen by comparing them with the documents of Vatican Council II. The planting of the church, a phrase we all recognize as the key to his teaching, figures in the Council's definition of the aim of mission (Ad Gentes, no. 6). The mystical body of Christ as the dynamic motor of mission, a concept dear to Father Charles, is recaptured in the Ad Gentes expression "the life that Christ communicates to his members" (no. 5), and again as that which constitutes "the deep requirement of catholicity" (no. 1).

Another of Pierre Charles's favorite concepts, the church as the "divine form of the world" to lead all to the Redeemer, surfaced at the Council in numerous texts that recommend appropriating everything good in whatever religious and secular spheres the world offers. The entire constitution Gaudium et Spes is the implementation of that particular emphasis.

Some of the specific issues for which Father Charles fought, because in his day they were still challenged, have henceforth been taken for granted: the restoration of the diaconate, which he proposed in 1933, appears in Lumen Gentium (no. 29) and in Ad Gentes (no. 16); preference for local clergy, which he advocated from 1926, is the recommendation of Ad Gentes (no. 16); the acculturation process he foresaw from the outset, and systematized in 1953, is treated in various paragraphs of Ad Gentes and in an entire section of Gaudium et Spes (nos. 54-62); respect for and dialogue with the non-Christian religions, and the idea that certain aspects of Christianity are reinforced by them (a concept found in Pierre Charles's teaching from 1935 onward), comes to flower in the Nostra Aetate declaration and in the establishment of the Secretariat for the Non-Christian Religions.

Pierre Charles long and vigorously advocated a church visibly present and with established hierarchy, but he also emphasized the nature of that church as mystical body and communion (an emphasis some commentators have failed to note). All this is reflected in the appeal of Lumen Gentium (no. 8) for a necessary equilibrium.

There are two ways by which an author may become outdated. The first is by being so completely identified with and limited to his own era that he is destined for that reason to disappear with it. Such, in fact, is the fate of all who attempt to be strictly "contemporary," and we may therefore be apprehensive about the future outcome of some very "contemporary" theories. The second way is to set forth ideas that can wait because they have permanent value. This can be done only by one who is ahead of his time or, to put it more precisely, one who is sensitive to ideas are absorbed little by little into the general, popular opinion. Thus the ideas that were earlier challenged become "the obvious," axioms so taken for granted that origin and author are forgotten, even when the substance is utilized and the formulas repeated.

In this second way Pierre Charles is becoming outdated. His concept of the church as body of Christ and sacrament of the world, with all the breadth of horizon and meaning implied in that, has now become part of our universal mentality. It is no small achievement to have contributed toward its coming to flower in the Christian and missionary mind.

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Studies on Pierre Charles and His Missiology


Two Doctoral Dissertations on the Missionary Theology of Charles Clarke


Two Doctoral Dissertations on the Missionary Theology of Charles Clarke

An Anthropological Apologetic for the Homogeneous Unit Principle in Missiology

Charles H. Kraft

The "homogeneous unit principle" may be defined simply as the dual observation that (1) human beings show an overwhelming predisposition to band together with "their own kind" and that (2) God accepts this fact and works with it. McGavran introduced and incorporated the term into Church Growth Missiological Theory in 1955 and 1970. Wagner (1978a) and a forthcoming volume by A. R. Tippett based on a consultation sponsored by the Lausanne Theology and Education Committee, however, discuss and develop the concept in much greater detail. In spite of the fact that the principle seems to its proponents to be eminently reasonable and scripturally demonstrable (see Wagner 1978), certain aspects of it are widely criticized in some quarters. I believe that the criticisms stem largely from misunderstandings inculcated by the conditioning of western culture.

There are several bases for misunderstanding the concept. Some see the concept as too mechanistic. Often they assume that for a group to be "homogeneous" there could be no internal diversity—everyone would have to be nearly a carbon copy of everyone else. Perhaps they are misled by their experience with the term "homogeneous" to assume that this principle advocates that some outside force reduces every member of such a group to sameness. On the contrary, the homogeneous unit (HU) principle simply recognizes that people who have learned via their cultural conditioning to prefer each other do, in fact, prefer to be together. It is another term for "society" or "group." The principle asserts, then, that God chooses to work with Jews as Jews and with Greeks as Greeks (1 Cor. 9:20-22). I seek in the first section below to discuss further the principle and the variety of possible attitudes toward it.

Another source of misunderstanding stems from an inability or unwillingness of western (or westernized) Christians to distinguish properly between what we think God should do and the way the Scriptures show him to work. Many ethnocentrically hold God accountable to our doctrines of fairness and a melting-pot approach to sociocultural diversity. The temptation is to regard God's scripturally recorded acceptance of people as they are within their groups as but a temporary expedient, something that we can and should dispense with as unchristian. In support of this position it is common to pull Galatians 3:28 out of its context and to put it against the whole of the rest of Scripture to claim that God is in favor of a single Babel-type society. The Galatians 3 passage shows, rather, that God takes social diversity seriously while advocating a single transcultural allegiance to himself. In the second section below I attempt to point out certain of the western cultural values that lead people to this kind of misunderstanding.

A third source of misunderstanding comes on, on the one hand, from fear and, on the other, from the American cultural tendency to blame impersonal structures rather than the personal users of those structures for whatever problems are associated with the structures. Americans place such faith in laws that they seem to fear that if there is no law against the misuse of such a principle as this one, it is inevitable that it will never be used well. In section three, below, I seek to deal with this objection.

A fourth source of misunderstanding lies in the American assumption that if Americans advocate employing the HU principle at all, they are, in fact, advocating that those groupings and the barriers between them be regarded as sacred and, therefore, never to be changed. This proneness to staticize as ideal any position advocated is an unfortunate occupational hazard readily fallen into by those influenced by western philosophy and theology. In the fourth section, below, I try to indicate that advocates of the HU principle see culture, culture change, and the influence of God in social processes more realistically. What we recommend as God's starting point is not, therefore, to be regarded as immutable and unchanged.

I. The Concept and Attitudes toward It

The homogeneous unit principle in missiology observes, first, that people cluster with those with whom they have something in common. The criteria that a people regard as basic to their "we-ness" form the overt focus of their homogeneity. Common language, culture, kinship, history, ritual, territory, time, and the like are typical criteria of sociocultural homogeneity. The HU principle observes, further, that in both the Bible and subsequent history, God seems to start his work with people where they are—within their sociocultural, spacial, and temporal homogeneity.

"The homogeneous unit principle in missiology observes, first, that people cluster with those with whom they have something in common."

I find it difficult as an anthropologist to be against such a principle if it is well formulated. Poorly formulated concepts such as the mechanistic misunderstanding cited above that deny what we understand to be basic principles of human interaction are, of course, a different matter. Whenever groups of people get together they can interact effectively only because they have a very high degree of homogeneity. They need to have a common language and culture, to meet in the same time frame, to meet in the same place, to share the commonality of a particular frame of reference, to have the leisure, the health, the finances, and whatever else is required. From an anthropological perspective, if there is no homogeneity, there is no groupness. It is possible to have collections of people without homogeneity but not possible to have groups without homogeneity.

From this point of view, all groups do operate in terms of...
There are, however, a number of cross-cutting factors that interact with and subdivide culturally defined HUs. Among these may be sex or one's nationality or one's language and culture or one's age or the time period in which one lives. We can argue about the definition of homogeneity, the components of homogeneity, the use of homogeneity, and several other issues with respect to it. But we cannot deny the necessity for homogeneity, and a rather high degree of homogeneity, if people are to interact effectively with each other. We might, in fact, suggest that the deeper the level of interaction, the greater the necessity for homogeneity.

There are several synonymous or nearly synonymous terms in use as labels for homogeneous units. I have mentioned the term “group.” An in-group is a group that defines its homogeneity at least partially with reference to other homogeneous units called outgroups. A society, often referred to as a culture, is a homogeneous unit functioning together in terms of a common language and culture.

The linguistic, cultural, and other criteria regarded as basic to the interaction of the members of a HU form a common structured “frame of reference” within which they operate. These frames of reference may be quite small, as with pairs of friends and families, or extremely large, as with multicultural and multinational groupings. The homogeneous units operating within such structured frames of reference will be correspondingly small or large. The larger the grouping, however, the smaller the number of criteria of homogeneity, the smaller the areas of interaction and the more fragile the frame of reference within which the homogeneity is expressed. The smaller the grouping, the greater the possibility (whether or not actualized) of tight-knit comprehensive homogeneity. Given human diversity and creativity, though, uniformity is never in view in the HU principle.

Cultural and linguistic criteria are basic to homogeneity. There are, however, a number of cross-cutting factors that interact with and subdivide culturally defined HUs. Among these may be geographical criteria, associational criteria, and religious- or worldview-commitment criteria. And this list is not, of course, exhaustive. The importance of any of these cross-cutting criteria may at given times be significantly expressed. The smaller the grouping, the greater the possibility (whether or not actualized) of tight-knit comprehensive homogeneity. Given human diversity and creativity, uniformity is never in view in the HU principle.

As Euroamericans we live in societies where the majority opinion is not necessarily in favor of the variety and types of HUs. Among these may be geographical criteria, associational criteria, social class criteria, sexual criteria, temporal criteria, age criteria, health criteria, and religious- or worldview-commitment criteria. And this list is not, of course, exhaustive. The importance of any of these cross-cutting criteria may at given times be significantly greater than even culture and language criteria, however. The fact that a person is female, for example, immediately puts her into a kind of homogeneity with every other female in the world that, in certain ways, links her more closely with women of other cultures and languages than with men of her own culture and language. Likewise, a common commitment to Christianity puts all Christians in an in-group with those of other cultures and languages who share their commitment. In terms of this criterion, then, we identify a homogeneity that transcends the ordinary cultural criteria for homogeneity. In spite of this fact, though, we must be aware of the problems involved in assuming too high a degree of homogeneity on the basis of a single shared factor. The more shared factors or criteria between the members of a group, the higher the degree of homogeneity. Further research is needed to identify and evaluate more precisely the variety and types of HU criteria.

The problem is not whether or not we agree to homogeneity, or even whether we agree to HU churches, but whether we like the homogeneity that we see all around us. Homogeneity is a fact. The question is: What is our attitude toward it? It may be helpful here to provide a typology of attitudes toward cultural diversity and homogeneity:

1. The Melting Pot Attitude. This attitude holds that diversity (i.e., many HUs in the same nation) is bad. We should, therefore, stamp out such diversity. We should “integrate” the diverse HUs into cultural sameness, working for larger and larger HUs in the nation and the church.

2. The Laissez-Faire Attitude. This attitude holds that having many HUs is bad and must be overcome. The way to overcome them, however, is simply to leave them alone and let cultural processes have their way. Eventually, then, our nation and/or church will be a single HU.

3. The Tourist Attitude. The tourist takes the attitude that diversity is interesting and quaint. We are not, therefore, to do anything about it except to observe the differences and, perhaps, to thank God that we are not strange the way they are.

4. The Reactionary Attitude. This attitude glorifies in the multiplicity of HUs and seeks to preserve them. Those who glorify “primitivity” tend to fit into this category, as do many anthropologists who see their research laboratories disappearing if traditional cultures disappear.

5. The Realist Attitude. This attitude holds that HUs exist and will always exist. We must, therefore, learn to work in terms of HUs whether or not we approve of everything that HUs are used for. The realist cannot be unaware of the fact that homogeneity can be used badly. The realist also observes that the larger the grouping, the less likely the majority of its members will share a high number of homogeneity-creating factors. The realist, in applying this insight to biblical interpretation, recognizes that God seems to have worked with, rather than against, homogeneity throughout the Scriptures.

This presentation assumes the realist attitude. I assume that human beings are now and will continue to be organized in HUs. If, then, people find themselves against one type or usage of homogeneity, they can only recommend another type or usage. If they find themselves against one basis for homogeneity, they can only recommend another basis.

As Christians we are, of course, strongly committed to Christianity as the most important basis for homogeneity. But we find it absolutely necessary to ask ourselves the question: What relationship does the Christian basis for homogeneity bear to the homogeneity that already exists? If we observe that people are organized into culturally homogeneous groupings, what is the relationship of Christian criteria to cultural criteria for homogeneity? Is Christianity to provide another set of cultural criteria in terms of which people form themselves into a competing culture that they label Christian? Or is Christianity a factor that can be added to any culture that, while bringing about changes in the culture, does not destroy all of the cultural criteria for homogeneity that existed before Christianity was introduced?

I see this matter as parallel to Jesus’ teaching concerning the kingdom of God. Many of Jesus’ followers saw the kingdom as a new cultural form, designed to compete with the kingdom of Rome. This would pit a Christian HU against a Roman HU in a battle for political power. I believe Jesus saw his kingdom in a different light, however. I believe he saw Christianity as a seed or yeast that exists and works within any and every HU. Christianity is to bring about change and transformation of existing HUs, but not to do away with them. This, I believe, is the point of Galatians 3:28 where Paul points to the fact that different HUs can and should place greater emphasis on the Christian criterion for homogeneity than on ethnic, sexual, or bondage criteria. None of these other criteria is, however, directly opposed.

II. Ethnocentrism and Homogeneous Units

As Euroamericans we live in societies where the majority opinion seems to be that cultural or linguistic diversity is bad or, at best, to
be barely tolerated. The people we live among, at least those in power, deny that HUs are a good thing. Many, perhaps most, still hold to the "melting-pot philosophy" that I have cited above. Or perhaps they are in the "laissez-faire" group. These two groups want to see diversity done away with and differ only with respect to the strategy. Ours is a society that seeks to "integrate" minority groups in order to avoid the embarrassment of having them around. Ours is a society noted overseas for its cultural imperialism predicated often on the belief in the superiority of our culture and the inferiority of other approaches to life. Ours is the society that has gone around the world establishing schools and churches aimed at converting the peoples of the world to our way of life. We who write and read this are strongly influenced by these ideas.

As Euroamericans we live in cultures where it is widely believed that "bigness is betterness." Westerners tend to strive for bigger numbers of people in organizations like nations, businesses, and churches. Ours is a mass society. It is also a mechanized society where large quantities of material items are dealt with at a time. We have a worldwide perspective that sees people as if they were mechanical things to be grouped together in large numbers. One visiting anthropologist has observed that Americans classify human beings into scenery, machinery, and persons (Smalley 1958). If bigness is betterness, there is little or no place for groups that happen to be small. Since this kind of thinking is endemic in our society, we can assume that we too are infected by it.

As Euroamericans we live in societies in which it is believed that we can control social processes as we have been able to control technological processes. In a discussion concerning HUs, one might, therefore, expect to hear a question such as: "Should we allow HUs?" The assumption behind such a question would be that it is possible for some people to control the social factors that organize people into HUs. But do we have control over such factors? Many of our fellow westerners, of course, believe that there are evolutionary factors at work in social processes similar to those that have been observed in technological processes that will make certain social structures inevitable. They see human beings moving from primitive homogeneity toward "civilized" heterogeneity eventuating, probably, in a single worldwide culture (presumably with us in charge). Whether or not these ideas are accurate, we are affected by them.

Furthermore, analogizing from our experience with large social structures and technological processes, we tend to assume that there should be the same general rules for everybody and that there is one right way for everyone to do any given thing. Our criteria, then, for the "right way" are again often more appropriate for machines than for people. For example, it is often felt within our society that organizations of people should be efficient. That organization is best, we think, that works smoothest, most rapidly, and for the least cost. An organization ought, therefore, to be efficient no matter what happens to the people that are a part of it. Often, furthermore, we look at the members of an organization as if they were parts of a machine. People in leadership capacities, for example, are looked on as relatively undifferentiated. That is, they can be shuffled in or out of various positions without regard to personal and family considerations. They, like the parts of a machine, can be required to do whatever job is necessary whether or not it is fulfilling to them or well suited to their best abilities. It is recognized that there are differences between people but at the same time felt that these differences should not be emphasized. They should, rather, be overlooked, ignored, or stamped out. To the extent that such attitudes pervade our culture, we can assume that they also affect our own attitudes.

As Euroamericans Christians we are constantly linked with people who feel guilty over the fact that their denominations have grown largely within given ethnic and social groups (HUs). Probably under the influence of the general Euroamerican belief that ethnic homogeneity is bad, they see ethnic homogeneity in churches as something that needs to be stamped out. Often, therefore, Christians in such groups, especially those in leadership positions, try to compensate for the guilt that they feel by turning against the homogeneity principle that was a major factor in making their groups strong. The desire for assimilation into the majority culture seems, at this point, to be more important to people of such denominations than the possibility of continued growth within their HU. Or perhaps the majority of the constituents of such denominations have already assimilated to the majority culture and therefore no longer see themselves as a distinct ethnic group. Either way, they are likely to be unaware of the sociocultural principles that they have unwittingly used to become strong. They therefore react against them as majority-culture Americans do when such principles are pointed out to them. Many of us as readers and writer of this article have come from such backgrounds and are therefore influenced by such attitudes.

As Euroamericans we live in a society in which it is traditional for people (especially academics) to philosophize a lot about what ought to be, often at the expense of a realistic attitude toward what is. We philosophize that people should not be different and conclude that anything that allows/perpetuates differences is invalid and unchristian. Since people should not be different, our society concludes that they should all be the same—like us. "Like us" is defined as logical, "unlike us" is regarded as illogical. Those who are Christians, then, automatically interpret Christianity as concerned in a primary way for producing conformity to what we believe to be the ideal. People "should," if they are to be properly Christian, be democratic and capitalistic. Some in our culture, of course, believe that individuals should be free to do their own thing. But even these tend to be conformist with respect to our governmental and economic forms. As simplistic as some of these views may sound to us, it is unlikely that we have escaped being influenced by them.

The point is that our attitude toward HUs is undoubtedly strongly influenced by the value system of the culture of which we are a part. Even those of us who seek to resist attitudes that are negative to HUs are likely to be influenced more than we realize by the ethnocentrism of the surrounding culture. We are likely, for example, either not to be open enough to the HU principle, or to be reacting too strongly against traditional western values in an attempt to support the principle.

Anthropological insight makes us wary of the influence of the monocultural western values that form the basis for the attitudes above. The insights of anthropology help us to appreciate the diversity that we see in the world and to attempt to apply the Golden Rule at the cultural level as well as at the individual level. As Christians, influenced by the cross-cultural insights of anthropology, we seek, therefore, to grant to other groups the respect and acceptance that we want them to grant to us. The realistic acceptance of the potential rightness of other approaches to life is, at the cultural level, the equivalent of Christian acceptance of the validity of other individuals at the individual level.
eralizations concerning the peoples of the world on the basis of experience in cross-cultural perspective, informed by Christian love, enables us to refrain from evaluating our own HUs too highly and other HUs too lowly (see Rom. 12:3).

A cross-cultural perspective, furthermore, seeks to make generalizations concerning the peoples of the world on the basis of experience in many cultures. We seek in this way to restrain our inclinations to pontificate from a monocultural base concerning how it should be for everyone. In discussing HUs, therefore, we start from the recognition that people of all cultures organize themselves into groups on the basis of their feelings of homogeneity. If it is observed that at least certain of the people in western culture attempt to go against this principle, it must be asked how well it is working for westerners to stand against the tide of humanity as a whole. Usually, of course, we find that people who are against the HU principle are against it only in theory. In practice, they, like everyone else, operate in terms of the principle.

III. A Focus on the Usage of Homogeneity

It has become important within anthropology (since Linton 1936) to recognize distinctions between cultural forms, their functions, their meanings, and their usages. The forms of a culture are the observable parts of which the culture is made up. These may be material items such as axes, houses, and clothing. Or they may be nonmaterial customs and structures such as marriage ceremonies, family patterns, words, or groups. When we talk about a HU we are dealing with a cultural form that we observe in every culture.

Each cultural form serves one or more functions within the culture of which it is a part. Axes may function as implements for chopping wood and/or as status symbols showing the greater prestige of an ax owner, and/or as implements for hammering in a nail, and/or as decorations in the homes of tourists. Marriage ceremonies may function to legitimize the starting of a new family, to level off wealth, for those who have much money and, therefore, finance expensive weddings, to make people in the community feel that everything has been done properly, to help provide a livelihood for florists, organists, dressmakers, preachers, etc.

Each cultural form, then, is evaluated and perceived by the participants in a culture in terms of a variety of meanings. An ax may mean such things as food getting, danger, prestige, decoration, and the like to those who possess or observe it. A marriage ceremony, likewise, has a variety of meanings to those who participate in or observe such a ceremony. To the couple being married the ceremony may mean relief, frustration, expense, fear, and the like. The church janitor, on the other hand, may see wedding ceremonies as bothersome. A wide variety of other meanings may be attached to the same wedding ceremony by the various participants and observers.

In addition to cultural forms, their functions and meanings, there is the very important matter of how cultural forms are used. Indeed, the functions and meanings of a given cultural form are dependent on how it is used. People use axes in different ways. When a person uses an ax to chop down a tree, it has one set of meanings. When, however, a person hangs an ax on his wall as a decoration, it has a different set of meanings. Likewise with a wedding ceremony. If a family uses a wedding ceremony to display their wealth, it has one set of meanings to at least some of the participants. If, however, a less wealthy family struggles to provide their young people with a fancy wedding, it has quite a different set of meanings to those who are aware of what is going on. If an organist uses a wedding ceremony purely to increase his or her income, it has one set of meanings to that person. If, however, the organist participates in the ceremony totally out of love and regard for the participants, the ceremony has a different set of meanings for him or her.

When, therefore, we talk about HUs, it is of great importance that we distinguish which of these aspects of homogeneity we are talking about. If we say that HUs are bad, are we suggesting that the existence of HUs is bad in and of itself? That is, is the HU as a cultural form a bad thing? Or are we identifying some or all of the functions, meanings, and usages of HUs as bad? Or, on the other hand, if we say that HUs are good, are we talking about form, function, meaning, or usage? Not until we identify which aspect of the problem we are discussing can we properly deal with the matter of alternatives to those things that we identify as undesirable.

Suppose, for example, that we take the position that the cultural form called HU, ingroup, or subculture is always bad. What alternatives can we offer? Can we suggest that it would be better to dissolve every grouping of people who enjoy being together? If so, what would we dissolve it into? Can we suggest that bigger, more heterogeneous groupings are always better than homogeneous groupings? I think we rapidly find ourselves in quite untenable positions if we consider badness to lie within the HU form itself.

Among the functions that HUs serve within cultures is that of structuring societies into manageable groupings of people. Homogeneous groupings are usually small, friendly, and they operate fairly smoothly and equitably. Such groupings, by including those whom they do include, exclude others. In order for them to function as ingroups, therefore, it seems necessary for them to function also as producers of outgroups. For those within the HU, though, such a group functions to provide a sense of definition and of meaningfulness. That is, people within such a group tend to know who they are and to feel that their lives are more meaningful than if they did not belong to such a group. Can we identify such functions of HUs as totally bad? Or should we distinguish those functions that are likely to be bad from those functions that are likely to be good for the people involved?

With respect to meaning, likewise, we find homogeneity conveying a variety of impressions, some of which we would want to endorse heartily and some of which we would question. An ingroup provides a sense of belonging for those within it. We see such a meaning in Israel and in the church, as well as in the multiplicity of ingroups that have little or no connection with a commitment to God. People feel that by participating in such groups they are more effectively expressing their relationship to God and to his people than they would be able to if they were not a part of such groups. They (we) say, "These are our type of people." This organization is ours, and it means more to us because it is ours than it would if it were someone else's." On the other hand—and we see this both in Israel and in the church as well as in other HUs—there is always the tendency toward exclusivity and snobbishness. For many of those within a HU, the existence of that particular ingroup means that they are better than other groups. For many, such groupings mean, "We are superior, they are inferior." In our assessment of HUs, I believe we will...
want to distinguish between the value of those meanings that are helpful and constructive in terms of the aims of Christianity and those meanings that are destructive.

The key thing in all of this is how people use the homogeneity of which they are a part. If a church HU communicates exclusivity and arrogance to another group, is it because homogeneity is bad in itself? Or is it because in this case those who participate in the ingroup are using their homogeneity badly? True, there may be a long-standing reputation for exclusivity on the part of Christian churches that has to be dealt with by the present generation of Christians. But this reputation has been built up by particular kinds of usage of the homogeneity and needs to be overcome by means of a different usage of the homogeneity. It is not inherent in homogeneity as a cultural form. Note, in contrast, the extremely positive effect that a HU has on one who is admitted to it and finds within it a sense of belonging, close friendship, and a matrix for healthy personal, social, and spiritual growth. Can we evaluate a HU used to meet such needs for some as totally bad, simply because it communicates exclusivity to others? Should we not continue to encourage the one usage while working diligently to improve the other?

Often, homogeneity is used in a kind of power game, as a means to dominate other people. This I believe is a wrong use of ingroupness. HUs can, however, be used in such a way that they witness to other groups concerning the possibility of greater love and concern for people both within and outside the group. HUs can be used in such a way that they focus on the rejection of outgroups. Or they can be used in such a way that they focus on the acceptance of outgroups. I believe that Jesus, in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, was trying to transform the concept of the Jews of his day from the model of their HU as an outgroup-rejector to the model of their HU as an outgroup-acceptor (neighbor).

The point is that homogeneity may be good or bad, depending on how it is used. My suggestion is that, in keeping with the aims of Christian growth, we should take a position that attempts to reinforce the strengths of homogeneity but to overcome the difficulties. Church congregations are intended to be HUs that give highly important Christian meaning to those within them. But Christian groups are not intended to be exclusivist. They are to live for themselves but not to live for themselves exclusively. They are commanded to live also for others without denying or minimizing the strengths of ingroupness. There needs, therefore, to be communication within the ingroup concerning a whole set of obligations to outgroups.

Christians are expected to grow in their experience of and relation to God and to their fellow Christians within the ingroup. Within this ingroup we are to experience and develop the security that we need in a relationship to God and to the other members of the ingroup. But we are also to learn a new definition of the concept “neighbor.” We are, further, to learn a commitment to the cause for which Jesus gave his life. And these things that we learn in our HUs relate to the outgroups around us.

How to teach such things effectively within an ingroup is always problematic. It is clear, however, that one ineffective way of going about the process is to attempt to smash the homogeneity of the ingroup. For such attempts result in the smashing of the group’s “selfhood”—their identity, the feelings of meaning and well-orderedness that they have based their lives on. This results in the kinds of insecurity that cripple people in all of their relationships and disable them for functioning effectively in their interactions with ingroup members and especially with the members of other groups. It reduces them, then, to a collection of demoralized individuals or subgroups, ripe for domination by an unscrupulous outgroup. They then either convert to the culture of the conquering outgroup or reconstitute themselves into one or more “underground” HUs awaiting their chance to reassert their selfhood as a fully functioning HU at a later date (see Tippett 1971). Such has been the plight of American blacks, Latin American Indians, and countless “Christianized” parts of tribal groups that, in the name of Christianity, have come to be dominated by a foreign culture at least as much as they have come to be indwelt by the living Christ.

IV. Culture Change and Homogeneous Units

The final anthropological insight that I would like to deal with concerns the relationship between culture change and homogeneity. Static views of culture (and of an anthropological perspective) give the impression that one who admits the validity of diverse groupings is locked in forever to endorsing the right for all of those groupings to continue to exist as they are. Informed missiologists, of course, assume no such thing. When we speak about accepting HUs as they are, we are speaking of a starting point only. We make no assumption that such groupings will or should continue to exist as they now are forever. Indeed, with anthropologists, we observe that every culture has always been and will continue to be in the process of change at all times. HUs that we now observe, therefore, are not now what they once were and will not continue to be what they now are—whether we like it or not.

We do not question the validity of change in HUs. We are, however, anxious that the changes that occur enhance the cause of Christ rather than retard it. We therefore seek to work with what is to assist people to move toward what we believe ought to be. This is what I have called a realist attitude, not a laissez-faire attitude. As part of this realist attitude I would like to point briefly to several important aspects of HU change.

The first thing to focus on is the fact that the use of homogeneity can be changed if need be. We have spoken above about the fact that homogeneity can be used wrongly. If we find, therefore, an unchristian exclusivism to characterize a given HU, I believe we have a Christian obligation to advocate change in the way that group is using its homogeneity. This is, I believe, what Jesus and Paul sought to do with Jewish homogeneity in the first century. They appealed for change from within the HU, not for the smashing of the unit. Even when they gave up on certain HUs it was to turn to other HUs, not to deny the validity of homogeneity.

In seeking to advocate change in the usage of homogeneity, however, it is crucial for the advocate to understand his or her position vis-à-vis the members of the HU. Homer Barnett (1953) presents what I believe to be the most helpful perspective in this regard. He points out that there are two kinds of advocate of change—those who advocate change in a HU of which they are a part and those who advocate change in someone else’s HU. The rules are different for outsiders who advocate change from those for insiders who advocate and can actually effect (“innovate”) changes within the ingroup. The bringing about of the changes is, however, always the task of cultural insiders that Barnett calls “innovators.” These are persons within the HU who are convinced by the advocate that given changes need to be made and who then make those changes. Learning how to advocate Christian change effectively within HUs, especially if one is an outsider, is a critical matter for further research. See Barnett.

* It is disturbing to observe that many of those who voice the strongest opposition to the continued existence of ethnic diversity within given organizations are often those who stand to gain power for their own HU by crushing the felt identity of those belonging to other HUs. On the other hand, it is often those who are out of power—those who stand to gain most in the power game by gaining recognition for their own HUs—who seem to be most in favor of recognizing and enshrining such diversity.
That change in the forms of HUs can come about is abundantly clear from the number of cases in the United States where assimilation and integration have taken place. Many ethnic groups (especially those from northern Europe) that operated in the first generation in their native language and a modified version of their European culture have, by the third or fourth generation, become "mainstream" WASPs. In many cases the present American HU is made up entirely of the descendants of the original European HUs. But in many cases there has been a considerable amount of realignment. There are even HUs that are interracial as the result of realignments of previously monoracial HUs. The fact that there isn't more of this should not surprise us nearly so much as the fact that there is some of it.

Nevertheless, I believe we all feel that within each Christian HU there should be growth in understanding the implications of the functional oneness in Christ of all Christian HUs that exerts pressure against the exclusivistic usage of homogeneity. This, in turn, should lead to formal realignments in Christian HUs. It is very problematic, however, to know when and how to exert pressure for change in this regard, and when and how simply to accept what is, without pressuring for change. It is obvious that a laissez-faire approach is usually ineffective as a technique for directing change—though, since cultures are always changing, we cannot assume that a laissez-faire approach will result in no change at all. Again the rules will differ for insiders and outsiders.

I have alluded above to the criteria in terms of which homogeneity is defined. Just what those criteria are and how important each is are important matters for further research. It seems clear, however, that social factors are much more important to homogeneity than, for example, geographical factors. Yet Americans continually speak of churches serving "their communities" while defining community in a geographical way. The problem is that our model for church often assumes that the geographical and sociological factors that in rural areas combined to create homogeneity continue to operate in combination. In many urban situations, especially, this is no longer the case. Thus, when a church building is located in a geographical area where people of more than one cultural group live, it is often expected that that church ought to be composed of those people. Proximity of geographical location does not, however, necessarily mean communityness. The chances are that the "community" served by that particular congregation does not live very close to the church geographically.

With effort, however, such a congregation might find it possible to produce new HUs consisting of people in the church and people in the geographical proximity. One of the least effective ways of doing this appears to be simply to invite people from the neighborhood into the existing HU. A more effective way would be to plant new HU churches in the area that will relate to each other but not be dominated by any of the others (e.g., the Temple Baptist Church of Los Angeles). In relating to each other, probably over a period of time, there can and should be reconstituting of HUs from original HUs that no longer feel the need to remain distinct from each other. This can be best accomplished, however, if each HU starts out in its relationships with the other HUs secure in its standing as a valid entity in its own right. Any threat of domination by one or more of the other HUs is likely to affect adversely the possibility of a given HU voluntarily entering into the reconstitution of HUs with other groups.

I believe we have data in the Scriptures that can be analyzed to assist us in developing a Christian approach to these issues. But much more research needs to be done. Jesus, for example, seems to have accepted the woman taken in adultery without exerting pressure for change, though he pressured the Pharisees continually. Paul, in writing to Philemon, accepted the institution of slavery. Was his appeal to Philemon to accept Onesimus back "as a brother" as well as "as a slave" (v. 16), an application of pressure for change in the institution of slavery? And what are the implications for a Christian approach to culture change of Jesus' refusal to "take up the sword" to defend himself and his cause against his enemies? He seems to have led his disciples to pressure for change peaceably, via persuasion, rather than via violence. What should we learn from these and other portions of Scripture concerning our approaches to HU change?

V. SUMMARY

I have attempted in this paper to shine an "anthropological searchlight" on several issues in the HU principle debate. In particular, I have sought to zero in on four aspects of the debate where anthropological insight can be particularly helpful. We need, first, to delineate the concept carefully. The matter of ethnocentrism in dealing with this issue must be a continuing concern of all of us. The distinction between HUs as forms and the use that is made of them is of critical importance. And the place and nature of change in HUs, though needing greater study and development, is likewise crucial to the whole debate.

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Liberation and Evangelization—A Feminist Perspective

Letty M. Russell

It is vital for the task of Christian mission in our time to catch a vision of the unity and interrelationship of liberation and evangelization in the work of the gospel. The two are very much related from a biblical, ecumenical, and feminist perspective. So much so that I would say that liberation is one shorthand description of what the Good News is that we have to “show and tell.” Sometimes we fail to see the interrelation because we spend so much time trying to exclude the perspective of “others” that we fail to pay attention to the way God’s arithmetic bids us share the Good News in many unexpected ways.

I. Perspectives on Interrelationship

There are many perspectives from which to approach our subject and each is colored by our own context, our own life story, and the ways in which we struggle together with others to live out the gospel message. The ultimate meaning of liberation or evangelization is not determined, however, by one’s perspective, be it feminist, black, Third World, or whatever. The meaning comes from the biblical story of what God is doing in bringing about New Creation in Jesus Christ. Yet that meaning must be interpreted in relation to our various “worldviews” and “church views.” Three perspectives which are important for me are: biblical, ecumenical, and feminist.

“... liberation is one shorthand description of what the Good News is that we have to ‘show and tell.’”

Biblical perspective. Liberation and evangelization are interrelated because of the freedom of God: from us and for us. God has chosen to be with us as a sending God, one who sends prophets, Son, apostles, and us to be part of God’s mission of bringing New Creation to fulfillment (Isa. 43:18-21). As Creator, God chooses to be free from us and from all creation; free from our manipulation or easy formulas. Yet as Liberator, God chooses to be free for us and the world in order to liberate us from our own individual and collective sin and oppression. The freedom of God allows us to be part of God’s continuing story by sharing the Good News of God’s liberating and saving actions with humanity.

One of the problems that Christians face in bridging their theological differences is that there is often confusion in the meaning and traditions of certain words. One of these English words is salvation. In the Bible there is no one meaning for this word. It has a wide spectrum. In the Old Testament one of the most important words for the goal of salvation is shalom: a social event, a venture in co-humanity which cannot be reduced to a formula. The word represents a summary of all the gifts of God to humanity and all creation. God’s promised gifts are to be fulfilled in the coming of the Prince of Peace to “establish it . . . with justice and with righteousness” (Isa. 9:6-7; Ps. 85:8-13). In the Old Testament two of the key motifs of salvation overlap and converge in the meaning of shalom: liberation as deliverance, and blessing as total spiritual and physical wholeness and well-being.

In the Gospels the two overlapping motifs of shalom appear in the One who came to fulfill the promise of salvation (Lk. 2:14; Jn. 14:27). In Paul’s writings and in the later epistles, however, the word most often used to connote salvation, soteria, deals mainly with the divine-human relationship and not with social relationships. In early church history we discover a tendency to reduce and narrow the broader understanding of shalom even further in the light of the Hellenistic view of the separation of body and soul. The Latin word salus became focused on one aspect of liberation—that of the eternal destiny of the soul-in-afterlife that was to be saved through the church.

In struggling to represent the wholeness of the biblical perspectives it is important that the Good News we share be as much as possible “the whole Gospel for the whole world.” In the view of most liberation theologies the two overlapping motifs of shalom often appear as a description of this Good News. Liberation is seen as a gift of God’s action in history, as well as the agenda of those who join together in community to share in transformation of the world. Blessing is often described as the process of humanization; the setting free of all humanity to have a future and a hope (cf. Jer. 29:11).

Ecumenical perspective. In the perspective of Christian response to God’s oikonomia, or stewardship of the world, there has always been a certain tension among various views of the ways in which the church should carry out its task by participating in God’s mission. In recent ecumenical history we can remind ourselves that the World Council of Churches (WCC) emerged in 1948, in part, because of the need for unity in mission and evangelism among the churches. In order to establish what might be an area of common understanding, the WCC undertook a ten-year study that concluded in 1967 with the publication of what Hans Hoekendijk has called a sort of “first ecumenical consensus” on the work of evangelism. Evangelism was understood as a sharing of words and worlds and included a threefold aspect of kerygma, koinonia, and diakonia. Emphasis was placed on our post-Christendom situation; on situational realism or what we call today “contextualism”; and on the laity as the people of mission.

The New Delhi Assembly in 1961 singled out the “Missionary Structures of the Congregation” for further investigation, and a report on this study in 1967 hoped to establish a sort of “second ecumenical consensus on the work of evangelism.” The report contained clues for structures that emerged from six perspectives. God-World-Church; History as Self-Understanding; Participation in God’s Mission; Humanization; Laity—Reference Group for Mission; Pluriformity of Structures.

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The result of this ongoing work seems to have been that many persons within and outside World Council churches were alienated by the second attempt at consensus and denounced both the report and the WCC. This is, of course, ancient history for us. A proposal was made to begin yet a third study at the Uppsala Assembly that could go more deeply into the meaning of humanization and mission. Task forces were begun in various concrete situations where they could begin to test out some of the understandings of evangelism in relation to the theme “Christians in Changing Institutions.” This study reached conclusion and was reported in 1974 but nothing even approaching consensus was attempted. Emphasis had shifted toward Christians in all parts of the world finding their way to witness to the gospel in their own setting. Perhaps our study here is part of a new stage in the discussion. At least we look with renewed hope for unity in mission, for much has happened in the last ten years to show that division between social action and evangelization are not made so easily. So-called “young evangelicals” are pointing to evangelical views of social concern. Christians in Third World contexts are beginning to speak of “salvation today” as a continuing effort to understand salvation as a social as well as an individual event. As Gutiérrez puts it:

Salvation—the communion of . . . [people] with God and the communion of . . . [people] among themselves—is something which embraces all human reality, transforms it, and leads it to its fullness in Christ.7

A truly global dialogue, giving voice to the many voiceless, is beginning to emerge. Liberation theologies are joining in that dialogue helping us to see the way actions of evangelization may be truly part of God’s liberating purpose and the way struggles for liberation may be truly part of God’s mission.

Feminist perspective. Among other liberation theologies that seek to reflect upon the experience of oppression in the light of their participation in God’s liberating actions in creating a more human society, feminist theologians share in this concern to give an account of the hope that is in us (I Pet. 3:15). Feminists are advocates of equality of the sexes. Feminist Christians join other Christians in sharing their experience of God’s love so that our theological understanding of God’s purpose and will may be increased.

There are three themes of feminist theologies that seem to be related to our present task. One is the emphasis on collective efforts at doing theology. Much theology emerges out of group consciousness and struggle and is not necessarily written by experts to be “handed down” to the nonprofessionals. Another is the serious effort to see ways in which consciousness raising can be used as a tool for reflection and action in searching for ways to work together for social and personal conversion. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, there is a strong rejection of either/or, dualistic categories of any sort, and a search for holistic ways of understanding the dimensions of our human existence. These perspectives are shared with many liberation theologies in their praxis methodology that leads them to “do and tell liberation.”9

II. Liberation and Evangelization

Participation in God’s liberating and blessing action in the world leads to a sharing of the Good News of God’s liberation in Jesus Christ or to the word/act of evangelization. Action coupled with reflection is not a program to be accomplished and forgotten. It is an evangelical attitude toward life itself; an attitude that looks at what is going on in situations of oppression, trying constantly to see the problems and to work out the way in which God’s will of liberation can be done; only to begin again with the next set of problems and consequent actions.10

Christian communities continue to witness to the sending and saving mission of God through proclamation, partnership, service, and celebration.11 These overlapping dimensions of communicating the gospel are very much a part of God’s liberating action. However, the dimensions are distorted when one aspect is emphasized at the expense of another and may become one-sided in respect to evangelization or to liberation.

One-sided views of evangelization. One of the ways of seeking to prevent the various dimensions of evangelism from becoming one-sided in the life of the church is to remember that the work of evangelization is derived, not primarily from our own actions alone, but from God’s traditioning action whose goal is shalom for all humanity. The church’s role is to point to Christ in the world and not to itself. Another way is to remember that evangelization includes the totality of God’s concern for liberation and blessing in all aspects of human life. It is also helpful to remember that the gospel is contextual or situation-variable. In each situation the meaning of the Good News speaks concretely about particular needs for liberation and speaks in the language, lifestyle, and social structures of that particular place (1 Cor. 9:19-21).

Liberation theologians can be helpful in maintaining the full dimensions of evangelization. They begin from a theocentric basis as reflection on the liberating action of God, and seek by means of praxis to focus on social as well as individual needs of persons and groups. Above all, liberation theologians are committed to share in the situations of oppression in order to make hoping and planning a means of bringing new life and freedom. Ahron Sapezian points to this when he says,

If rootedness is the starting point, commitment to the dispossession in their struggle for emancipation is the basic ethical stance in the “theology of liberation.”12

For liberation theologies the key issue is not orthodoxy but orthopraxis.13 Without denying the importance of disciplined, logical, and documented reflection on the meaning of biblical and ecclesial tradition, it is basically concerned, not with reformulation of doctrines, but with the challenge of giving form to the message of the gospel as a praxis of liberation.

One-sided views of liberation. The dangers of one-sidedness are also present in liberation theologies when they make use of ideologies in such a way that the gospel message is obscured. Just as evangelism can degenerate into narrow proselytism, which sees its purpose solely as recruitment of members, liberation theologies sometimes become focused only on mobilization of people for a particular cause. They tend to forget that ultimately the cause is transcended by God’s cause of eschatological mission. In the same way the practice of evangelism has sometimes become a form of propaganda designed to create people in our own image instead of letting the love of God become incarnated into peoples’ own lifestyles and culture. Liberation theologies have this same tendency when their social concern degenerates only into a form of ideology which all people are supposed to accept.

It helps to avoid these dangers when we remember that traditioning itself has a double meaning. The handing over (paradidomai) of Christ can mean betrayal to the cross as well as sharing God’s victorious love with others. Participation in God’s traditioning of Christ calls for constant care not to betray the tradition by false methods of handing over, which become barriers to the hearing and living out of the Good News.

III. God’s Arithmetic and the Good News

In seeking to move beyond the false dichotomy of liberation vs. evangelization, it may help us to remember that God works in...
many unexpected ways to bring about the New Age. Sometimes, when we least expect it, small numbers of people are very important in representing the larger whole of humanity in God’s purpose. At other times there is a multiplication of gifts when we least expect it, or an inefficient use of time and resources affords the possibility of injustice and unequal distribution of wealth and power in the world. We also appear to be in a growing minus situation in the world and also from the fact that it is often not as “successful” as the work of others. We find ourselves in a minus situation in many unexpected ways in relation to our sharing in the task of liberation and evangelization. Although representative numbers and calculated inefficiency sometimes lead to lack of “worldly success,” there is also a marvelous multiplication table in the way God works in the world. God sometimes adds to the number of those who are being saved (Acts 2:47). For, when there is a new focus of relationship in Jesus Christ, the one becomes twelve, becomes five hundred, becomes five thousand, and so on!

If we are confident that “God is an equal-opportunity provider” then we are called to make the resources of God’s creation and God’s will for justice and liberation available to all humanity. We are commissioned to accept responsibility for the many failures and problems of our work and that of our partners in Christian community, but at the same time to rejoice when multiplication signs of justice and peace are discovered. When our partnership in liberation and evangelization is lived in expectancy of God’s creative and redemptive love, we will often find that the gifts and talents of people are multiplied like loaves and fishes in places where we might least expect them.

Perhaps the reminder of such clues as these about the strange ways in which God is at work will help us to keep our perspective focused on what God is about to do in God’s New Creation and not upon our own plans and purposes (2 Cor. 5:17). In God’s eschatological arithmetic, false dualisms between liberation and evangelization are overcome in many unexpected ways. J. C. Hoekendijk reminds us of this when he says,

To let Christian hope determine our evangelism means that we move forward in a world with unlimited possibilities, a world in which we shall not be surprised when something unforeseen happens, but shall, rather, be really surprised at our little faith, which forbids us to expect the unprecedented.

We may be able to avoid the dangers of proselytism through a liberating evangelization that points toward God’s New Creation. We may be able to avoid the dangers of secularism through an evangelical liberation that points toward the Good News of Jesus Christ. Liberation and evangelization belong together. Evangelization is a praxis of liberation, for it is in the doing and telling of the Good News of Jesus Christ that we are set free. This liberation will always be one shared with others and understood from many perspectives, as we journey together on the road to freedom—

with others, for others, toward God’s future.

Notes

15. Ibid., p. 66.
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Christian Medical Service and Japan’s Relation to the Asian Situation

Noboru Iwamura, M.D.

When I left Japan to investigate the medical situation in Asia, I became aware of my own weakness and discovered the emptiness in much of human life. On the other hand, in going out from Japan on such a mission, I also experienced the great power and grace of the One who cannot be seen.

About 90 percent of Asia’s people live in farming or fishing villages, or in city slums; the remaining 10 percent live in upper-class areas or have large land holdings. The figures vary from country to country, but on the average it is the 10 percent in the higher-income bracket who utilize 90 percent of the wealth—food, education, land, and medical resources—while the 90 percent in the low-income group have access to the remaining 10 percent of the resources only.

Many of these Asian countries, moreover, have recently moved from colonial domination to independence, and they are all experiencing rapid urbanization and industrialization. As the rural resources, including people, gravitate to the cities, the problems become increasingly critical. One result is that the 90 percent suffer from chronic poverty and starvation. Theirs is a society with no hospitals, widespread illiteracy and, for them, a deteriorating economic situation.

"About 90 percent of Asia’s people live in farming or fishing villages, or in city slums."

Japan, now recovering from its own recent economic maladjustments, finds itself enmeshed in the very changes experienced by many other Asian countries currently undergoing modernization and industrialization. This is especially true where industrialization depends on foreign capital, and technology is given high priority. Japan itself is involved in the process by which people leave their rural communities at an accelerated and exhausting pace.

The matter is further complicated for the Japan Overseas Christian Medical Cooperative Service (JOCs), because much of Asia was once colonized or invaded militarily by the Japanese. The economic, human, and spiritual damage done in consequence to the rice-roots people of Asia cannot be erased or forgotten. Japan’s defeat in the war was, from the viewpoint of many Asian countries, their opportunity for independence.

Our position in JOCs is similar in some ways to that of western missionaries when troops from their countries invaded Asian lands as colonizers. Whatever the inner intention of those early missionaries as they went with the cross, the same cross we serve under, in many cases they were objectively the agents of the colonizers. We must be very careful to avoid the same kind of mistake ourselves as we seek the true will of God for our situation. To perceive his will we must be in touch with the local, rice-roots people, particularly the poor. The following dialogue illustrates the thinking of many such people in Asia:

"We caused you great inconvenience during the war."
"Please see that another war does not start."
"We cannot find words adequate to apologize for the present economic invasion."
"In that case let us common people have some of the rewards, some of the knowledge, some of the technical skills. We don’t want the Japanese government or Japanese financiers controlling our government or our businesses while seeking their own profits. What we want is an opportunity to develop self-reliance."

At all times and in every country God provides human resources to aid in the self-development of the sick and the poor. The common people in all Asian countries are, by and large, openhearted, optimistic, and religious. If God is working to build his kingdom through such people, it is with them that the JOCs workers must join to help in their drive for self-reliance. In so doing, we can continue to rely on Christ to supply our needs through the individual gifts of the Japanese people. We can be used by God as a resource for the self-development of rice-roots people in the very villages where they are born and expect to die.

The Asian Medical Situation and a Policy of Response

The culture of each land and people in Asia has its traditional resources for healing. Those under Chinese cultural influence use medicinal herbs and minerals along with supplementary therapies such as acupuncture. Where Indian influence is strong, yoga exercises and diet control are added to herbal and mineral drugs. In thousands of villages and in city slums, the 90 percent of the population I have referred to as rice-roots people depend by and large on such traditional healing methods, although about one-fourth of them have some access to western medical resources. These traditional methods have evolved from the deep-rooted wisdom of the people in the various areas. They use the herbs and minerals available, according to the climatic and topographical peculiarities of their respective areas, and by diet control with locally grown foods they maintain an intimate relationship with the cyclic phases of nature.

Some traditional health practices are, of course, related to superstitions, and not a few are ineffective or even dangerous. Most of the Asian governments emphasize these ineffective and dangerous aspects and, exaggerating the effectiveness of western medicine, turn to it as a tool for modernization.

Unquestionably some mission boards brought modern western medicine into the various Asian countries as a tool of mission, building hospitals to save the poor and ill. In the vicinity of the hospitals they built churches, and western church life became part of their missionary work. They also began western-type schools to train people in technical skills. The local people who responded to

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A Proposal

workers and health centers would suffice.

women of endurance, wisdom, spiritual power, and leadership would be no immediate need for doctors and nurses. Health western hospitals and schools, thus developing a western enclave that had little contact with their fellows in terms of helping them to develop self-sufficiency.

The hospitals alone became modernized (westernized), but the patients and others living in the vicinity lost their simple, premodern economic life based primarily on production. Their spiritual life, with its superstitions, was also disrupted. Neither the newly independent governments nor the Christian missions have done much until very recently about the problems caused by this social breakdown, and even yet they have devised no systematic plans for dealing with those problems.

Sickness among these rice-roots people is caused chiefly by malnutrition, the result of their extreme poverty. Weakened bodies offer no resistance to contagious diseases, further spread by unsanitary conditions and superstition. Education and economic development could reduce these problems by about one-half. If the services of the traditional healers were improved, there would be no immediate need for doctors and nurses. Health workers and health centers would suffice.

A concrete policy is needed to help the village people develop skills that are in harmony with the culture of each particular area. In formulating such a policy, we must keep in mind that 90 percent of these people are unable to read, and that transportation facilities such as roads and harbors are still lacking.

An overall regional development plan should make use of both traditional medical practices and simple western medical skills. Middle-level health professionals are needed to help train those involved in direct medical services. The people themselves need first to choose from their own number young men and women of endurance, wisdom, spiritual power, and leadership ability. Ordinarily these would be self-employed farmers or fishermen, and in the early stages of the plan they would serve in their own villages without remuneration. Some of them, those with special leadership ability, could then be selected for additional training to become health assistants to work with the health volunteers in the local villages. Medical cases that such health assistants are unable to treat adequately would be referred to health-care facilities having access to doctors.

This approach has recently been carried out on a small scale as part of an overall development plan with the help of some western mission agencies. The key to success in these efforts was the use of local resources—financial and human—to continue the programs under their own power after mission support ended. It was not only Christians who carried on the programs, but Hindus, Buddhists and, in some cases, communists as well.

A Proposal to JOCS

Self-reliance depends upon having the seed of the gospel planted in the language and culture of the people. It develops when Jesus Christ comes to be known not only as the Son of God and Savior but also as Healer. The power of the resurrection is working in the lives of ordinary people who have no contact with western culture or other Asian cultures, and Japanese Christians can share with them in this experience.

The message coming from India, Indonesia, and some parts of the Philippines is that true gospel and true healing need not be clothed in either western or urban dress. In the light of that message, JOCS can also design a program in close relationship with traditional tribal cultures and thus reach out with true evangelism and true healing. Political developments will assuredly follow, involving a citizens' movement among people seeking to raise their own level of livelihood and liberate themselves from the power of darkness. This will include efforts to improve health conditions through a democratic movement of "health by the people," and Japanese agencies that do not join in that movement will be unable to go forward.

Two thousand years ago Jesus said, "The poor shall have the Good News preached to them, the prisoners shall be liberated, and the blind shall receive sight." He also said, "This day this prophecy is fulfilled." Since then the kingdom of God has moved out and forward. Whatever people build in their own wisdom and power falls, just as the Tower of Babel fell. But eternal life comes in Christ, and the process will be repeated continuously until he returns.

"...true gospel and true healing need not be clothed in either Western or urban dress."

In their rush toward urbanization and industrialization, governments and financiers are saying, "Catch up with Japan, overtake Japan." But they fail to see that Japan, forgetting that man does not live by bread alone, has become a godless civilization. JOCS is a creation of God to perform a healing ministry in Japan and throughout Asia, and to serve as a point of contact with the living God.

Groups in South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore are preparing to cooperate with JOCS in a movement called "From Asians to Asians." Most of the Christian hospitals in Asia are suffering from lack of financial resources and personnel. In the "From Asians to Asians" movement we can become co-workers and co-sufferers with them. It is good to begin, even on a small scale, and we can hope that through true healing a return to the Word will take place in Asia.

A possible direction for this movement is to promote community health programs at the popular level, looking toward their integration in a comprehensive regional development program. Such an approach has not yet attracted much attention because it takes a long time to develop, but it could be initiated quickly. With the cooperation of organizations like the YMCA, the YWCA, and the Asia Rural Institute, it could begin immediately. For example, when graduates of the Asia Rural Institute return to their respective homes they might organize such programs in cooperation with their own National Councils of Churches. JOCS could supply various resources, but the director of each community health program should be a national Christian, based perhaps at a hospital in a frontier section. There could be an exchange of JOCS personnel at the end of each three-year period—such people as nutritionists, home science experts, nurses, midwives, health workers, and public health doctors. Where needed, JOCS could also provide pediatricians, obstetricians, and others—specialists to work in community health centers or rural hospitals.

Senior personnel, those with ten years or more experience, could be assigned to central hospitals for periods of three to six months. Patients for whom the junior medical personnel cannot provide adequate treatment would be sent to those larger centers. The young doctors could also confer with the more experienced, and in this way the level of the district hospitals would be raised.

Another possibility is for members of the Japan Christian Medical Association, those who are professors or well-trained specialists, to serve at university or teaching hospitals as advisers, in the areas of their specialty, to people working in the community health centers.

But JOCS workers, whether they are posted at frontier hospitals, community health centers, central hospitals, or universities—and whether for short-term or long-term assignments—must serve with national counterparts. In this way, the knowledge, skills, and spiritual insights they bring will remain...
Tur Abdin: A Christian Minority Struggles to Preserve Its Identity

Norman A. Horner

For Christians of the ancient and venerable Syrian Orthodox Church, the Holy Land extends beyond Jerusalem and Palestine to include Tur Abdin, “Mountain of the Monks.” There, across a hilly countryside of southeastern Turkey, a now declining Christian population stoutly preserves the traditions, language, and historic sites of its apostolic heritage. This is the region so graphically described by Oswald H. Parry in Six Months in a Syrian Monastery (London: H. Cox, 1895). Parry’s book is still the only substantial source of information in English about the Syrian Orthodox “homeland”; and his maps, although outdated, are still a useful guide to this corner of Mesopotamia.

Five men traveled together to Tur Abdin during the latter half of July 1975: Father George Saliba, patriarchal vicar of Mt. Lebanon and head of Mar Aphrem Seminary in Atchaneh; Dennis Hilgendorf, director of the Middle East Lutheran Ministry in Beirut; Gabriel Bahnan, a layman of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria-Lebanon; Benjamin Pannikal, a young Syrian Orthodox deacon from South India; and Norman Horner, an ecumenical consultant for the United Presbyterian Church and professor at the Near East School of Theology. Father George had ready entrée to places we could never have found otherwise, and it was he who defined the purpose of the trip: “to see our situation with your eyes, hear it with your ears, and feel it with your hearts.” The following account of what we saw, heard, and felt includes some interpretations for which the writer of this article must, of course, accept sole responsibility.

To say that one who visits Tur Abdin leaves the twentieth century and moves back into the fourth or fifth is not strictly true. One goes instead into a marvelous mixture of the antique and the contemporary. Churches are there which were first built before the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. At least one of them—at Hakh—dates to the apostolic era and may be the oldest Christian building still in use anywhere in the world. “Still in use” is precisely what distinguishes the churches and monasteries of Tur Abdin from ancient Christian monuments in Asia Minor and elsewhere. Not only do pilgrims come to marvel, but faithful communities of villagers gather at each church building every evening for vesper prayers as well as on Sundays and feast days for the liturgy.

The Syriac (Aramaic) language continues to be the basic medium of communication in Tur Abdin, and indeed some of the older generation understand neither Turkish nor Arabic. Yet it is a modern Syriac which, like all other languages, has changed with the times; the struggle to retain it amid the growing pressures of a Turkish educational system is not easy. Tur Abdin is no longer the solidly Christian enclave of past centuries. The Muslim population is now a vast and growing majority. Some sixty villages have managed to remain exclusively Christian, jealously guarding against any Muslim residence in their midst; but for the most part it is a losing battle.

That Tur Abdin should be part of modern Turkey is a political accident. It belongs historically and linguistically to Syria, but was ceded to Turkey by foreign powers after the Ottoman collapse and the rise of the new Turkish state. There is widespread feeling among the people that they would fare better as a religious minority under Syrian law, a feeling doubtless heightened by lingering memories of Turkish massacres in the 1920s when the Syrian Orthodox, with their own nationalistic ambitions, shared the fate of the Armenians. Father George told us the experience of his own family. On his father’s side, in an extended family of seventy, only two—his father and an aunt—survived the massacres. At that time many thousands of these Syrian Christians fled across the borders into the then more hospitable areas of Syria and Iraq, and today the most populous diocese of their church lies just south of Tur Abdin in the Syrian Jezira between the Euphrates and the Tigris.

The Syrian Orthodox people who still live in Tur Abdin have more or less reconciled themselves to Turkish rule and even display the picture of Atatürk with appreciation: “Ataturk meant well for the Christian minorities,” they say. “Unfortunately, he died before his program was really implemented.” Their major concern now is of neglect rather than persecution in this far-eastern Turkish province where such essentials as road mainte-
Christian Villages

Among the Christian villages of Tur Abdin are Kulleth, Middo, Basabrina, Idil and, with a special importance of its own, Hakh. The people continue to use the Syriac names for these and all other places, ignoring the newer Turkish designations, which appear on road maps and signposts.

Kulleth is an important village of two hundred families. It lies about midway between Mardin and Midyat, and purists would say that it marks the western boundary of Tur Abdin proper. There is no resident priest in Kulleth at present, and so Father George had been asked by the patriarchal vicar in Mardin to stay there over Saturday night and to celebrate the Sunday liturgy. The villagers were clearly delighted with the arrangement. It was already time for Saturday vespers when we arrived, and they led us through very narrow streets to the church building. For a full five minutes the bell was rung to signal a special service that evening. An entirely male congregation soon gathered, several of the rustic farmers quickly robing and taking their positions as deacons and choristers. Most of the others sat on the floor.

Dinner was at the house of the former mukhtar. At least twenty of us sat cross-legged on cushions against the wall, and someone brought soap and a towel, offering to wash the guests’ feet. A large cloth was spread in the center of the floor, and dishes placed before us heaped high with rice, roast lamb, vegetables, a most unusual type of bread, and a variety of fruits. Father George was in a reflective mood, breaking out periodically into Syriac song. Quite suddenly a village family came in, carrying a three-year-old boy who had fallen that morning from a rooftop. A doctor in Mardin had taken the necessary stitches and had entirely covered the child’s face with bandages. Now the anxious parents were bringing him to the visiting priest for anointing with oil. After a quiet and impressive ritual of prayer, the family went out as inconspicuously as they had entered.

Back on the parish-house roof we prepared to bed down under the stars. People reminisced about Ottoman days when the Syrian patriarchate was in Mardin. One story concerned a prominent bishop who had defected to Catholic allegiance and tried surreptitiously to assume the office of Orthodox Patriarch. He gained the sultan’s firman through bribery. Those who opposed him fled and elected a proper patriarch at the monastery then in Kulleth. They were captured and imprisoned, but when the prison walls collapsed after three days of unprecedented rainfall there was no further doubt about whose side God was on!

Sunday liturgy began at 7:00 A.M., and this time the women were present—filling the entire back half of the church behind a screen. Scripture lessons, read with great strength and clarity, included passages most calculated to encourage a minority people, for example, “you are the light of the world.” Homemade candles, pieces cut from a long coil of heavily waxed cord and completely dripless, were held directly over the book of the Gospels in this building where there were no electric lights. Before the Eucharist, a large group of women gathered before the priest and, half concealed by his wide, outstretched cape, made a group confession. The service was in all the most vibrant and impressive worship I have witnessed in a long while.

A Syrian Protestant church stands very close to the Orthodox building in Kulleth. However, the twenty families of that congregation have worshiped with the Orthodox since their own pastor died in 1974 and his family emigrated to Sweden. Relationships between the two communities seem to be especially cordial. One of the Orthodox deacons pointed out the grave of the Protestant pastor, located prominently in the Orthodox churchyard. The deacon described him as “the man who spoke like a Bible” because he knew so many texts from memory, and expressed regret that a replacement had not been sent. “We are one tree with different branches,” he added.

Middo, some miles east of Midyat, is another village without a priest but it has one of the oldest church buildings in Tur Abdin. The church is a cavelike structure, dating to the second or third century, and is entered by a door so small that one has to crouch low. At one side of the sanctuary is an ancient altar crudely fashioned of two rough stones, one upright and the other placed horizontally across the top of it. A new church is under construction on the far side of what is called the “lake.” There are surely not enough people for two congregations in Middo now, even though the entire population is Christian. What a pity if their intention is to leave the old building as merely a museum.

At Basabrina, a few miles west of Middo, we parked the car at a roadside police station and walked a rather long way into the village. Along the rough path were people winnowing grain in the manner described in the New Testament. “The chaff which the wind driveth away” became for us a visual as well as a verbal picture.

The tomb of Mar Shimon, a famous Syriac hymnologist, is in Basabrina’s main church. Long centuries ago there was a dispute about where his body should be buried. A donkey bearing the
with the eldest, after which she and her teacher, Lazarus, also likened we had already seen on many an altar curtain and wall picture. St. Shmoodi was a good woman of long ago whose Christian faithfulness provoked an evil king to slay her seven children before her eyes. They were decapitated one by one, beginning with the eldest, after which she and her teacher, Lazarus, also asked to be beheaded rather than renounce their faith.

“Centuries ago the hillsides of Tur Abdin were dotted with monasteries large and small, together housing several thousand monks.”

Idil lies at the eastern edge of our travels in Tur Abdin. Parry’s map shows it as Azakh, the older name. A resident priest serves at the small and very old church in Idil, and we watched him at one of his highly practical duties: an illiterate villager had received a letter concerning some property transaction and had brought it to the priest to be read to him in the presence of witnesses.

Hakh is probably the most spectacular center of pilgrimage in all Tur Abdin. The church dates to the first century and contains two primitive stone altars, one at either side of a more recently built main altar. A magnificent Byzantine mosaic in the dome above the main altar is still largely intact and retains much of its original color. According to an ancient tradition, one of the stone altars at Hakh was erected by the “fifth Magi,” a king who did not reach Jerusalem and Bethlehem with the others but who showed even more zeal than his fellow travelers in constructing altars at various places in the region. In subsequent centuries a large dome was erected over the church, and that dome is curiously surrounded and entirely concealed by a rectangular building with columns much in the style of a Greek temple.

It is said that at one time there were forty churches in Hakh, many of them founded by royalty. Some of the churches, merely ruins now, are still visible, as we discovered in a walk around the area.

Monks, Nuns, and Monasteries

Centuries ago the hillsides of Tur Abdin were dotted with monasteries large and small, together housing several thousand monks. Two large monasteries and a few smaller ones remain, but the company of monks is now hardly more than a dozen all told. Four are at Deir Zafaran near Mardin, three at Deir Mar Gabriel some twenty miles east of Midyat. The other monks have been sent one by one to care for the few smaller monastic centers that have not been allowed to fall into disuse. Some of these monks have a lonely life indeed, separated not only from their fellow monks but from Christian communities as such.

The monks steadfastly pursue their accustomed discipline of prayer and worship. They observe long periods of fasting throughout the ecclesiastical year and abstain at all times from eating meat. A truly cloistered life is, however, quite impossible for any of them now. They are obliged to serve a “caretaker” function, spending much of their time at the unremitting daily chores of maintaining the buildings, cultivating the gardens and orchards, harvesting the crops, supervising workmen, attending to legal matters, meeting visitors, entertaining guests, and the like. Those at Deir Zafaran and Deir Mar Gabriel also maintain schools for fifty or more village boys, a few of whom will ultimately become priests.

Even though their number is now small, the monks of Tur Abdin are no less dedicated to the monastic life than were those of past centuries. One of the Deir Zafaran community has reluctantly agreed to serve for a time as patriarchal vicar in Mardin since the recent retirement of the archbishop, but he returns as often as possible to the monastery. Not even the patriarch has been able thus far to persuade him to be consecrated as the new archbishop. Everything—his Turkish citizenship, wide experience, boundless energy, administrative skills—made him the logical successor for that episcopal office, but to accept it would be to risk complete change of the lifestyle to which he is committed. He wants only to remain in the monastic community to which he has belonged so long. Such dedication is not limited to the older generation. The youngest monk at Deir Zafaran is less than twenty years of age. I knew him as a thirteen-year-old pre-seminarian in Lebanon only six years ago. One day he mysteriously disappeared from school, to the great consternation of teachers, fellow students, and especially of his parents in nearby Beirut. Weeks later, word came from Deir Zafaran that he had made his way across Syria to that remote corner of Turkey and insisted upon remaining there as a monk. After two or three years of novitiate, he was ordained into the community and has become one of its most valued members.

Nuns in Tur Abdin only slightly outnumber the monks. Ten of them are at Deir Mar Gabriel, one at Deir Zafaran, two at Deir Mar Yakoub near Salah, and one at Hakh. The self-image of a Syrian Orthodox nun is somewhat different from that to which westerners are accustomed in the Roman Catholic Church. There are no orders which differ from one another, and thus no counterparts to the great variety of disciplines and functions possible in the Catholic orders. The nun of the Syrian Church is clad in a very simple black habit, more drab even than those used by Catholic sisters before the recent aggiornamento. It would be inaccurate to say that they live a completely cloistered life, but they seem to have very limited association with others than their own number. At the time of our visit, the lone nun at Deir Zafaran was seriously ill and in need of surgery. Presumably because of an exaggerated modesty with respect to male doctors, she had refused medical attention. The monks unfortunately did not press the matter and seemed to have an almost fatalistic resignation about it.

Few of these nuns are well enough educated to teach in the schools, and for the most part they are content with the domestic chores of the monasteries. Yet they are by no means all widows who have sought the monastic life as the only alternative. Some, indeed, are very young girls. Two teenage sisters only recently refused to follow other members of their family in emigration to Australia because of a firm determination to enter the community of nuns at Deir Mar Gabriel.

Syrian Orthodox people throughout the world look to the monasteries of Tur Abdin with great veneration and make adequate financial provision for those institutions. There is hardly another place in the world to which Syrian Christians are more eager to go on pilgrimage and, for them, nowhere else is more hallowed by the blood of martyrs and by miraculous interventions of the Holy Spirit across the centuries.

We approached Deir Zafaran (the Saffron Monastery) by way of Mardin. Mardin is built entirely on a mountainside, the largest city so constructed that I have ever seen. The Syrian Orthodox cathedral there is the Church of the Forty Martyrs (Roman legionnaires who were thrown into an ice-cold lake in A.D. 320 because they would not renounce Christian faith). Within the compound is a building in which the patriarchate was located for a very long time—until it was moved to Homs, Syria in 1933 and then to Damascus in 1959. Some ancient manuscripts of great scholarly interest are still kept in what was once the patriarchal library at Mardin, but the building now serves primarily as office and residence for the vicar and as parish hall for the congregation.

Turning off the highway just at the outskirts of the city, we
continued along a rough gravel road for about five miles. Deir Zafaran is a dramatic picture indeed, rising from the plateau like a great medieval castle. Massive iron doors (which are securely locked every night with a twelve-inch key) open to a long ramp leading to the pleasant cloister above.

We joined monks and workmen at stone tables in the undecorated refectory for an ample supper of goat's milk, rice served on tin plates, and fruit from the monastery's orchards. Turkish coffee, prepared especially for us, was served later in the cloister. Bathing facilities were spigots of spine-tingling cold water and buckets with which to pour the water over oneself. Declining a gracious invitation to use a bedroom long ago reserved for the patriarch only, we chose beds in the cooler air of a wide, flat roof, probably the very place described by Parry when he stayed at Deir Zafaran in 1894.

We had been forewarned that the Friday liturgy begins early, and by 5:00 A.M. it was already under way. We sleepy visitors, each in his own good time, arrived at the church door, removing our shoes before entering in compliance with the local custom. There are three ancient churches within the monastery compound, and the particular one in which the liturgy was celebrated that morning dates to a period before the Council of Chalcedon, as witnessed by the Byzantine symbolism still clearly visible. The monastery proper is said to have been first constructed during the eleventh century, artfully retaining this third-century church within its walls. Only the monks, school pupils, and workmen attend the daily services there, but villagers come from long distances for the Sunday liturgy and on feast days.

Breakfast was Spartan: olives, diluted goat's milk, and very hard brown bread baked in a cylindrical loaf. Again we ate at the stone tables with the monks and a crew of four or five laborers. Some of the latter seem to be men of limited mental and physical capacity who need the kind of home provided for them at the monastery, and who respond with faithful and uncomplaining service in a variety of menial tasks. (One of them managed to douse us with water each morning when he timed his duties in the washroom to coincide with our morning ablutions!) Two or three elderly widows prepare meals, make cheese and butter in the traditional ways, and do other household chores.

After breakfast we set out on a long, steep climb to the top of a mountain back of Deir Zafaran to the ancient rock monasteries of Mar Yakoub and Our Lady. The high rocks are honeycombed with a great complex of monastic cells, which were inhabited by as many as a hundred monks in the eleventh century and by considerable numbers for several centuries thereafter. Some of those monks stayed throughout their adult lives. Others underwent this solitary discipline for briefer periods, among them several who ultimately became patriarchs of the Church. Food was brought once a week to that lonely retreat. Those who brought it were, for some of the hermits and cenobites at least, the only contact with the outside world. Water was never a problem because unfailing springs flow from those high rocks, enough to supply some of the needs of Deir Zafaran as well. There the monks still point with a kind of religious veneration to the continuing flow of water through pipes and into the great monastery below. Fresh water is, however, about the only tangible souvenir of a remarkable past. The last inhabitant of the rock cells died in 1933, and there are unlikely to be any replacements. As Father George put it, "These are no longer cave days."

Deir Mar Gabriel (alternatively called Deir el Umar) is some twenty miles east of Midyat. It is reached by a highway currently traveled only in daylight hours because of the danger of armed brigands after dark. Midyat is a smaller and less impressive city than Mardin, but just as predominantly Muslim. Yet it has no less than five Syrian Orthodox church buildings, all close to the center of town and within a few minutes' walk from each other. The explanation of this apparent redundancy is that every prominent family wants to build a church on its own property in appreciation for prayers that have been answered.

Just after dusk we turned from the highway into a short stretch of dirt road leading to Deir Mar Gabriel. The big gates were promptly opened and we parked the car in a spacious courtyard within the walls. On a wide porch upstairs we met retired archbishop Iwanis Afram, seated quite regally on a bed of cushions and dressed in bright red robes. The archbishop is "in his nineties," retired from active service in Mardin only two years ago. (I had met him at the funeral of Patriarch Athenagoras in 1972.) He is still alert and mentally active, has an altogether remarkable appetite, and seems to suffer only the arthritic stiffness virtually inevitable in advanced age. Archbishop Iwanis is clearly the dominant figure at Deir Mar Gabriel, where he intends to spend the rest of his days and finally to be buried in a tomb already constructed according to his specifications.

The joint annual meeting of the Eastern Fellowship of Professors of Missions and the Eastern Section of the American Society of Missiology will be held November 3-4, 1978, at the Gilmor Sloane Center, Stony Point, New York.

A supper was prepared for us and served there on the porch. Some twenty-five of the schoolboys then came to greet us and stayed for an hour or more while Father George enthusiastically led them in a variety of songs. Finally, mattresses were spread on the roof, where we joined the already sleeping boys. One of the boys had killed a large scorpion that very evening, and the memory of it helped to take our minds off the mosquitoes and other insects, which were in fact an ever-present annoyance.

Deir Mar Gabriel, although as old as Zafaran and incorporating a church of the very early centuries, has an overall appearance of more modernity. Some new buildings have been constructed through the benevolence of Syrian Orthodox people abroad, Mar Athanasius Samuel, archbishop of North America, having played a leading role in this generosity. The oldest part of the monastery includes the Chapel of St. Mary, the "House of the Saints," and an enormous refectory with rounded ceiling of stone. The refectory has not been used for its intended purpose in many centuries and is now a storage area. The "House of the Saints" contains the bones of some 8,000, it is claimed, most of them martyrs to whom miracles were attributed. There the tombs of Mar Shimoon, who founded the monastery, and Mar Gabriel, who first built it, are still visible above a floor that has been considerably raised by the accumulation of the centuries. Those two saints, like other bishops to this day, are buried in a sitting position.

Miracles and Martyrs

Stories of long-ago miracles abound in Tur Abdin, a notable concentration of them at Deir Mar Gabriel. Myths they may be, but they support the living certainty that God has revealed his power in very concrete ways to the Syrian Orthodox throughout their long history.

Just outside the walls of this monastic compound and not far from the main buildings is a free-standing and rather strange cubic structure known as "the tower of the princess." There, centuries ago, an Egyptian princess lived the secluded life of a nun—presumably the first nun ever to be at Deir Mar Gabriel. Tradition says that she arrived with an entourage of eight hundred soldiers. In those days women were forbidden to enter the monastery's church, where a large stone was miraculously

October 1978
“Martyrdom and miracles have marked the history of Tur Abdin from the beginning.”

Nearby is the tomb of another ancient monk whose story is a favorite of the raconteurs. In days long past he had befriended a wealthy Muslim merchant who regularly stopped at the monastery with caravans making their slow journeys between Aleppo and Baghdad. The merchant entrusted a bag of gold to his friend to keep it safe from brigands along the road. Two years later he returned to learn that the monk had died in the meantime. When the others of the community insisted that they knew nothing about his gold, he loudly and menacingly accused them of stealing it. But they persuaded him to visit the tomb of his deceased friend below the church. In response to their questions, a voice from the tomb directed them to a hidden recess in the wall of the former monk’s cell where they found the gold safe and intact. The merchant, then declaring that the voice had been only a clever trick, insisted upon opening the tomb. There they found the body in a state of remarkable preservation (bodies of the saints being characteristically slow to decompose) “and the tongue was still moving.” The merchant, declaring that if the God of the monks could speak from the dead he wanted to follow that God, became a Christian and remained as a monk at Deir Mar Gabriel until he died.

Martyrdom and miracles have marked the history of Tur Abdin from the beginning. Indeed, the very survival of the monasteries and the Christian communities is no less than miraculous. Sacked repeatedly over the centuries by Tamerlane and his Mongol hordes, Persians, Turks, Kurds, and others, they have never given up. It is hardly surprising that these Syrian Christians are still preoccupied with the memory of martyrs, for them martyrdom has continued well into the twentieth century. As recently as the end of World War I, the monks of Deir Mar Gabriel were chained together by Turkish soldiers, thrown into a deep pit just outside the walls of the monastery, and crushed to death with stones. Nor is it strange that accounts of the miraculous should play so large a part in their faith. Those of us who are sometimes inclined to scoff at “folk religion” of this kind will do well to consider that miracle stories have always been one of the chief vehicles of religious truth. They are, in fact, no less important today and stand in refreshing contrast to the arid rationalism in which so many people of the modern world have imprisoned themselves. True faith is always more than an intellectual exercise; it is humble readiness to see the wonder of God and rejoice in it.

For 1,500 years Tur Abdin has continued to be the focal center of a great church. The Syrian Orthodox, including many families from that “homeland” itself, are now scattered more widely than ever before across the face of the earth. Their total membership is much reduced from the vast numbers of earlier centuries, but true greatness is not to be measured numerically. Their parishes—in Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, several European countries, and in the new worlds of the Americas and Australia—still reflect something of the spirit of Tur Abdin.

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The New Context of Black Theology in the United States

Gayraud S. Wilmore

Most Black American scholars in the field of religion and theology contend that Black Theology, as critical reflection about God and religious faith from the perspective of racial oppression and African cultural adaptation in America, began with the first Black American "Independent Churches" in the eighteenth century.¹ The 1960s, however, brought the first attempts since Garveyism to produce a more or less systematic Black Christian Theology.² In the immediate post-civil-rights period, the focus was reparations and Black Power considered in the light of the gospel. The flood of books and articles has diminished during the last three years, but interest in Black Theology continues, with the international scene and the renewal of the Black Church providing a new basis for contextualization.³

When the Society for the Study of Black Religion (SSBR) was organized in 1970, a second phase of Black theological formation in the United States became evident.⁴ The earlier work of the Theological Commission of the National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC) was largely in response to current political developments and had an ad hoc quality. Under the SSBR, Black Theology took on greater credibility as an academic discipline. But it was the participation of black scholars in the Detroit conference on Theology in the Americas, in August 1975, which sensitized certain key leaders to issues that Black Theology could address only by broadening its context in an engagement with other ethnic minority and Third World theologians.

"The Black-White dichotomy shows signs of breaking up, yielding to a widening perspective on human oppression which recognizes the importance of class and cultural analyses of other theologians."

Two hundred Latin American and North American Christians met in Detroit during the week of August 17-24, 1975. The purpose was an extended analysis of the theology of liberation in Latin America, but the conference also dealt with the new theological winds blowing through the Black, Native American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Asian American, and White working-class churches in the United States. The issues of feminist theology and traditional Protestant and Catholic liberal theology were faced in subsequent meetings. Keyed to the vitality of Latin American liberation theology, much of the Detroit conference focused on the socioeconomic exploitation of minorities, the repression of human rights, and the class struggle within both the internal and external colonies of North and South America. Theologians, church leaders, and grass-roots Christians wrestled together over the meaning of God's action in history, the need for radical transformation, the tensions between Marxism and Christianity, and the task of the churches in the praxis of liberation.

Out of this meeting came the decision to organize several projects to continue study and move toward greater collaboration in an attack upon the structures of injustice and domination at a second hemispheric conference to be convened in 1980. The Black Theology Project, chaired by Dr. Charles Spivey, former president of Payne Theological Seminary (A.M.E.) and pastor of Quinn Memorial Chapel in Chicago, rapidly arose as the most successful of the several continuation projects sponsored by Theology in the Americas.⁵

The Detroit conference made a decisive impact on Black theologians. Since 1975, a network of small groups of pastors, professors, church people, and social activists has been developed and nurtured by the staff of the Black Theology Project. In the summer of 1977, the project sponsored in Atlanta what is probably the most significant conference ever held on the subject of Black Theology and its relation to the Black Church and community.⁶

What have been some of the consequences of the transcultural and interracial encounters with Black theologians orchestrated by Theology in the Americas? Recent statements and activities seem to point in the direction of a less exclusive introspective obsession with the American race problem than was characteristic of the earliest development of Black Theology. The Black-White dichotomy shows signs of breaking up, yielding to a widening perspective on human oppression which recognizes the importance of the class and cultural analyses of other theologians—especially the Latin Americans. But there should be no misunderstanding here. Black theologians are still concerned with racist oppression. Despite the insistence of the Latinos that they exaggerate race and color and give too little attention to the class factor, Blacks continue to argue that as far as the North American experience is involved, the contradictions within American Christianity are closely related to and aggravated by its historic connection with color prejudice.

The basic problem addressed by Black Theology is the ideological role that racism plays in the culture of the North Atlantic Christian community. A culture which equated the authority and omnipotence of Euroamerican White men with the authority and omnipotence of God himself. A culture which for almost two thousand years created deity in the image of the White man and gave to God the attributes of Caucasian idealization. That is essentially the religious basis of the ideology of the Christian West and the cause of much of the oppression that Blacks and other non-White minorities have experienced. Black Theology, therefore, is about the disestablishment of this ideology, the dismantling of the old order based upon it, the liberation from ideology to reality by disengaging the Black religious experience and its theological interpretation from the appropriation of an imposed unreality. Its purpose is the development of an inner-directed, self-determined theological reflection grounded in the

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What Black Theology affirms is the opposite of the ideology that distorts the Christian faith to make God identical with the culture of White domination. It is, rather, that God has identified himself with the oppressed of every race and nation, and is present in their suffering, humiliation, and death. The violence perpetrated upon the oppressed is violence against God. Their death is God’s assassination. But God raised Jesus from death and because we see in him the faces of the poor, oppressed peoples of the world—and particularly Black people denigrated by both Jewish and Christian biblical interpretation—Black theologians speak unabashedly of the Black Messiah, this oppressed and assassinated God who is risen to give life and hope to all who are oppressed. This Black Messiah who is the Oppressed Man of God, who is seen in the faces of the poor, oppressed Black people, and whose death and resurrection is their rising to new life and power, is the meaning of the gospel of liberation that stands opposite to the ideology of domination by which the God of the Christian culture of Europe and America was fabricated before and after the Enlightenment.7

The failure of Enlightenment optimism to purge the West of the idea of White supremacy means that the seminal Black Theology of Afro-American Christians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the first self-conscious and consistent attempt to break with the ideological foundation of Euroamerican culture. It is possible to identify, as a consequence of this critical discontinuity between Black and White theology, three specific contributions that Black theologians have made to the theological enterprise in Europe and North America since the mid-1960s.

First, Black Theology discovered on indisputable biblical grounds that the liberation of the poor and oppressed, of which Blacks are a prominent example in western civilization, is at the heart of the Christian faith. It is not that this truth had not been known before, but it had been either suppressed or ignored whenever it surfaced over the millennia of Judeo-Christian history. Black Theology has helped us to rediscover that this is what our faith is about—the liberation of human beings from every form of oppression.

Second, Black Theology demonstrates that Jesus Christ can be de-Americanized without losing his essential meaning as the incarnate Son of God who takes away the sin of the world by his cross and resurrection. Black Theology authenticated an apprehension of Jesus of Nazareth in cultural symbols and contexts other than those of White American society. In so doing, it provides an example or model for the indigenization of theology in other societies and cultures. Subsequent developments in the United States within Hispanic, Native American, and Asian American theologies show that this de-Americanization, dewesternization of Christ opened the way for other ethnic groups to identify with him in the depths of their own historical experience. We now see the oppressed and assassinated Messiah rising in cultural symbols other than those of the White people of the West.

Third, Black Theology has legitimated a return to the religious genius of the ancestors who came from places other than Europe. It discovered traces of God’s visitation in the primal non-Christian traditions of the past. Because of the work Black historians and theologians have done on the African inheritance in Black religion in the New World, the beliefs, insights, and religious imagination of “primitive” Blacks can be appropriated as correctives to the deficiencies of the western version of the Christian faith.

All of this is not to suggest that Black Theology does not have excesses and deficiencies of its own. Black theologians regarded American reality almost exclusively in terms of Black and White. The attempt to understand Scripture and God’s action in history in a way that made sense to oppressed Blacks makes it too easy to invest skin color with ontological significance. Certainly the Black-White dualism dramatically symbolizes a basic aspect of western experience without which much of it cannot be decoded. But the Black-White dichotomy leaves out other important areas of church and societal experience—particularly those reflecting the experience of Red, Brown, and Yellow people. Moreover, the oppression of women, Appalachian Whites, homosexuals, and other groups in American life must qualify dualistic analysis.

All theology, Black Theology included, is contextual and situational. We do not know of any school of Christian theology that is universal. The claim of some White theologians that what they call theology is the universal understanding of the faith for modern people is not only ridiculous, but an arrogant falsification of the nature of all theological reflection. Since 1975, Black theologians are less tempted to fall into this way of thinking about their work than formerly. Of course, they continue to make the interpretation of the gospel to the poor and oppressed Blacks of North America their primary vocation. But Black Theology today makes room in its formulations for an understanding of liberation that includes the contributions of Native American, Hispanic, Asian, and White brothers and sisters in struggle for the humanity made possible by the cross of Christ.”

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This means that the task of theology leading to authentic pluralism in a world context is fraught with enormous dangers and difficulties. It can, nevertheless, begin in the United States with its unique racial and cultural composition. The work of Black theologians over the last ten years provides American churches with foundational resources. Theology in the Americas, as the first research group to promote the idea that collaborative theological work on liberation should be the next item on the American theological agenda, deserves much greater support from the churches than it has received thus far.

Judging by their silence, many White American theologians do not seem to be enthusiastic about the possibility of a renewal of theology along these lines. Baffled by the demise of neo-orthodoxy since the Black revolution of the 1960s, they tend to see
century. Those who find in process philosophy the only acceptance, contusion, fragmentation, and an exaggerated religious pluralism that produces theological fads unlikely to stand the test of time and the enormous new challenges of the twenty-first century. Those who find in process philosophy the only acceptable basis for a new systemization speak of an emerging Gestalt that will reject all dualism and view the reality of God, people, and nature as an organic whole, interdependent congeries connected in ways that verify the bio-spiritual analysis of modern psychology and the expanding, open-ended process conceptions of the physicists. These theologians have much to contribute in the areas of science and technology, particularly as they apply to bioethics and ecology, and their suggestions of an evolving, androgynous God makes contact with a central emphasis in some feminist theology.

But for all its interest in futurism and relevance to the difficult and pressing problems of the age of robots and computers—the science of the First World—many White theologians seem, to the theologians of liberation among the non-White minorities, to be one step removed from the immediate and monotonously routine problems of economic exploitation, political oppression, and cultural domination. These problems call for the conscientization and mobilization of the submerged masses of the United States and the Third World. The revival of conservative evangelicalism, the pop religion and mystification inundating the middle-class White churches, which are in retreat from social action, renders them not only unresponsive to process theology but oblivious to its existence. Black Theology and the other ethnic theologies of liberation may frighten the White churchgoing public, but the truth they speak about the meaning of the gospel and the judgment and grace of God cannot be evaded. Process theology does not attack the soft underbelly of American religion—its hedonism, its racism, and its worship of a privatistic, domesticated God.

There is no guarantee that the new context of Black Theology will provide an acceptable basis for wider collaboration or even that the God of the Black, Hispanic, and Native American theologians will turn out to be the God of the Bible who is no respecter of persons and races. The folk-religious base of the ethnic theologies spells certain dangers as well as an opportunity for a revolution of the oppressed masses. It is nevertheless true that these theologies open the way for American churches better to understand indigenous theologies in the Third World and make an important contribution to the internationalization of the mission of American Christianity. The convergence of non-White ethnicity and theology in the United States, to the extent that it avoids trivialization and the suburban captivity of the mainline churches, can recall neglected themes in biblical religion and can tap into subterranean streams which flow together at the deepest levels of our common humanity and need. Robert N. Bellah, a perceptive critic of the current American religious pluralism, is correct in his observation that

The survival of ethnic identities seems to me only meaningful in the context of the survival of religious identities. Religion provides an essential mediation between the ethnic group and the larger culture of the modern world. Not only does religion often preserve the deepest symbols of ethnic identity, it also exerts a pull away from ethnic particularity to that which is morally and religiously universal.

Notes

1. This is one of the basic discoveries of ethnohistorical research since 1964 and is elaborated in my Black Religion and Black Radicalism (New York: Doubleday, 1972). Further work is needed to show how the study of the present-day African Independent Churches, if important differences are respected, throws light on the theological development of Black religious institutions in the United States and the Caribbean, which began to break away from the White churches in the 1700s.


4. The SSBR's chief architect was C. Shelby Rooks, president of Chicago Theological Seminary. Its founding was related to the increased attention given to the academic study of Black religion since 1968 by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). See the issue of Theological Education on the theme "The Black Religious Experience and Theological Education" (Spring 1970). The SSBR includes most of the 158 Black scholars teaching (full- and part-time in 1976) in ATS-related seminaries. It has a working group of theologians, many of whom are also members of the Theological Commission of the National Conference of Black Churchmen. Within the last few years, the SSBR sponsored two consultations on Black Theology in dialogue with African and Caribbean theologians: Accra, Ghana, 1974, and Kingston, Jamaica, 1976. The papers of the Accra meeting were published in the Journal of Religious Thought 22/2 (1975).


6. Theology in the Americas has its office at the Interchurch Center, 475 Riverside Drive, New York City, and is headed by Sergio Torres, an exiled priest-theologian who also staffs the new Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians.

7. Although the Enlightenment intellectuals opposed slavery, their argument that Blacks were a separate species did considerable damage. In the end, the polygenist theorists “frequently denied that the nonwhite races were people at all and maintained that the missionary efforts among them were wholly wasted.” Thomas F. Gossett, Race: The History of an Idea in America (Dallas: S.M.U. Press, 1963), p. 54.


Christian Faith in a Religiously Plural World.


A conference held at Washington and Lee University in 1976 was the occasion for the collection of papers gathered in this volume. The conference was designed to help Christians think about what their faith means in relation to the religiously pluralistic world in which they live. The topic is a timely one. To help in the thinking there were several believers from other faiths present at the conference, giving their reactions to the Christians. The book contains thirteen papers, all worth reading and pondering. Their rich variety cannot be dealt with in one review. We will have to content ourselves here with picking out one theme which seems more central than any other to the conference discussions.

The theme which seems to stand out more than any other is that of the translatability of Christianity. Donald G. Dawe raises this theme in his keynote address for the conference. He maintains that “the name of Jesus,” without which there is no salvation, is a name that is “translatable” so that its meaning can be found in other faiths. He then proceeds to define what that meaning is. Jesus, he says, is “the disclosure of the pattern of God’s action in human salvation.” That pattern is one of new being arising from the death of the old, of self-forgetful abnegation opening the way to true life. This is a pattern that operates through many religions. It is a motif that is brought to expression in vastly different ways in different faiths. But these may all be seen as translations of “the name of Jesus.”

Professor Dawe has a fruitful and thought-provoking idea in this notion of translatability. The main question about it, which emerges from the later lectures by other participants, is whether the translation he has chosen to make is not too broad and general to do justice to the name being translated. Later lectures also raise further implications of the idea of translatability. John Carman points out that the translation of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures assumes something in common in religious experience, which makes translation recognizable. He therefore pleads for a retention of the concept of “religion” (which Wilfred Cantwell Smith has rejected in some earlier writings) because religion is something that ties us together, something we all have in common, as is shown by the fact of translatability.

Smith himself in a brief comment suggests that it is not religion but humanity which people have in common and it is on the basis of our common experience of being human that translations can be made. Charles P. Price believes, rather, that it is because of common sharing in divine revelation that there can be translation, but since he regards divine revelation as that which makes us human, his view is not very different from Smith’s. All these contributions bring out the importance of the fact of translation. The continuing and more difficult task will be to make the right translations.

—Charles W. Forman


The year 1978 has brought to the forefront two publications whose interrelationship is only partly by design. It is likely that the Lausanne Congress of 1974 had something to do with accelerating the launching of the journal Gospel in Context, published by Partnership in Mission ($11.00 per year; 1564 Edge Hill Road, Abington, Pa. 19001; U.S.A.). Interestingly, the second issue of this scholarly quarterly (April 1978) carried five responses to the second of the Lausanne “Occasional Papers,” this one bearing the title Gospel and Culture. The link between the two publications, though unofficial, is perfectly logical. Both are concerned with “contextualization” and its explication for mission.

The Willowbank Report, as Gospel and Culture is officially described, is the condensed findings from a consultation of 33 theologians, anthropologists, linguists, missionaries and pastors from all six continents. They toiled for a week in January 1978 over papers prepared and circulated in advance, as well as over points new and old that were raised in intense verbal encounter, all of it intended to clarify vexed and complicated aspects of the various settings within which the givenness of the gospel must be declared, dramatized and (within limits) domesticated.


The fact that such a document has been produced, and under the aegis of the Lausanne Committee at that, is a happy omen. Admittedly, except for the serious and self-conscious notice it takes of the cultural climate by which the entry of the gospel is always affected, there is nothing startling in the entire report.

It is the candor of it that is refreshing. Samples: “No theological statement is culture-free” (p. 13); “sensitive cross-cultural witnesses will not arrive at their sphere of service with a prepackaged gospel” (p. 14); “there is the humility to begin our communication...”

By Hans Waldenfels.

Waldenfels, a German Jesuit, who worked for many years in Japan and is now professor of theology at the University of Bonn, wrote this book as a contribution to the dialogue between Buddhists and Christians. As the focus of his study, Waldenfels chose the concept of "absolute nothingness" or "emptiness," a key word in the philosophy of K. Nishitani, a modern Buddhist philosopher (b. 1900) in Kyoto, under whom he studied in Japan. In his preface Nishitani attests that in this book for the first time a westerner has managed to approach in a deeper way the core of the problem in the dialogue between Christians and Buddhists (p. 3).

Part I describes the background of the philosophy of Nishitani: Buddha, Nagarjuna, Zen Buddhism, and Nishida Kitaro. Nothing is said about the Chinese tradition. Part II deals with the philosophy of Nishitani, who is in the Zen tradition. In part III some elements are discussed which are important for a dialogue between Christians and Buddhists. The book is rich in quotations.

While western thinking is interested primarily in being and is addicted to beings, the Buddhist tradition is concerned more with "nothingness," the "emptiness" that is not the opposite of being but embraces both being and nothingness and can imply also fullness—and therefore is called "absolute nothingness," since only a "relative" nothingness would be an antithesis to being. The western reader may not always be happy dealing with this terminology, but actually "emptiness"—an element of old Buddhist tradition—is used by Nishitani to reflect on the situation of modern life and to reflect on the possible relations to Christian tradition.

Waldenfels does not deny that eastern ways of thinking have both advantages and disadvantages, that, for example, the concrete problems of world history are not always taken seriously or that Buddhist philosophers are too quickly inclined to say that western thinking is still on a purely objective level, which they themselves have surpassed. He points out that in the West, too, there are traditions in which the element of emptiness is very much present, for example, in the Theologia Negativa from Dionysius Areopagita to Thomas Aquinas and the Medieval German mystics, especially Meister Eckhart.

Also some modern Roman Catholic theologians show a certain affinity to the eastern concept of emptiness, especially Kark Rahner in his writings on the experience of God. Similar results can be found in the work of Leslie Dewar, a Roman Catholic philosopher, and in the books of Carl Albrecht on mystics. Normally Japanese people are better informed on the western traditions than we are on the eastern ones, but exactly these parallels in modern Roman Catholic theology are hardly known in Japan.

The deepest biblical expression of emptiness can be found in the self-renunciation of God in Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:5-8). Therefore Waldenfels asks whether there could be the possibility of encounter between the smiling enlightened Buddha and the painful face of Jesus the Crucified—"in a new communication of depth, from where only the real self can rise in poverty, death and absolute nothingness" (p. 207).

The reader should be aware that this book is a pioneer work, an attempt to find an approach to the dialogue between East and West in an aspect of eastern thinking itself, concretely in the work of an Asian philosopher who is interested also in western thinking.

—Fritz Kollbrunner, S.M.B.

The Worldly Evangelicals.


The author of The Young Evangelicals and The New Charismatics has given us another lucid, stimulating, yet annoyingly ethnocentric survey of contemporary North American evangelicalism.

Quebedeaux's two-chapter introduction suggests the emergence of evangelicals as the likely new mainstream of American Protestantism and analyses the effect of modern culture on the evangelical subculture.

In subsequent chapters the author, himself a graduate of Oxford University and Harvard Divinity School, and a professed evangelical, describes the peculiar theological, ecclesiastical, evangelistic, and cultural "mix" of the evangelical right.

Waldron Scott is General Secretary of the World Evangelical Fellowship.
center establishment. He then juxtaposes this with a similar view of the younger evangelical left and radical left. He concludes with a discussion of a provocative question: Today's evangelicals, tomorrow's liberals?

The title of the book seems to be a double-entendre. Quebedeaux sees the evangelical establishment as having been compromised by worldly success and the new evangelical left as in the process of succumbing to the same worldly intellectual values that produced a now outdated theological liberalism.

Consequently Quebedeaux foresees an accelerating convergence of interests between the new evangelical left and the heirs of the old liberal/neo-orthodox traditions. His discussion of this (chapter 10) will be of special interest to readers of the Occasional Bulletin. He sees the emerging alliance as reflecting, to a significant degree, the continuing influence of Karl Barth (not always acknowledged) on mainstream denominational leaders and the evangelical left's increasing receptivity to Barth.

There are brief references to Lausanne and the developmental concerns of organizations such as World Vision, and a one-page summary of liberation theology. Apart from these, Quebedeaux does not venture to describe evangelical missionary outreach (a major feature of twentieth-century evangelicalism) or the relations of North American evangelicals with their European and Third World counterparts. He does note in passing, however, the impact of Third World evangelical spokesmen on students attending InterVarsity's triennial missionary conventions at Urbana.

To those who would gain insight into the "in-house" dynamics of North American evangelicals, this book is recommended. Those who wish a better understanding of evangelicalism in the larger global context will have to look elsewhere.

— Waldron Scott

The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action: Latin American Reflections.


Juan Luis Segundo, a native of Uruguay, is known for his five-volume work on liberation theology, A Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity. The present book is a discussion of pastoral theology.

Segundo's thesis is that pastoral theology must keep pace with the cul-
tural changes involved in the transition from traditional society to modern society. Among the changes discussed are urbanization, the deracination of peoples, consumerism, and the relativization of values. In the new context, personal conviction and choice, not birth and culture, will determine who are Christians.

Segundo shows that the church in its pastoral practice often follows ways more suited to the closed milieu of previous times. It is concerned with large numbers, maintains its own institutions, and makes alliances of convenience with questionable political and economic structures. He believes that the hidden motives which keep the church from implementing new approaches are the fear of other people’s freedom, an excessive concern for the salvation of the masses, and hesitancy to trust the power of the gospel.

His solution is developed in an excellent chapter on evangelization, a task which, Segundo thinks, is not being properly carried out in Latin America. The essentials of Christianity must be preached as Good News for the here and now and in a manner which people can understand. Also needed is a new ecclesiology, one which realizes that the church is established for the world, that the universality of the church is qualitative not quantitative, and that the church may not always be the best place for salvation.

The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action is stimulating reading. Its analysis of the contemporary cultural situation, its insistence on freedom over force in evangelization, its critiques of the church as a security blanket and of compromising alliances, and finally, its call for a renewal of evangelization will make it of interest to missionaries and to pastors of established churches.

Not all readers will agree with everything said by Segundo. Indeed, some of his positions may be overdrawn. It might be asked, for example, whether the present cultural situation has really produced a “radically different” human being, or if it would be wise for the church to hand over all its institutions to the state, or, finally, whether Segundo’s rejection of majorities in favor of “heroic minorities” is a realistic position. His ecclesiology seems to favor the prophetic few. In view of the time that Jesus spent with the multitudes, is such an exclusive focus the best Christian position?

Difficulties such as these, however, do not detract from the many fine insights and examples that this book contains.

—Michael C. Reilly, S.J.

**Being and the Messiah: The Message of St. John.**


In most of Miranda’s writings there are new insights and compelling challenges, but—unless the reader is prepared for it—there is a grave danger that these will be lost in a rising tide of irritation and negative reaction at both Miranda’s exegetical mannerisms and style of expression. This book is no exception. It also is characterized by: (a) a gross theological reductionism—I would love to know what Miranda makes of the letter to the Hebrews—that ignores what does not suit the author’s theme; (b) a heavy dependence on liberal theological scholarship—what Miranda calls “scientific” exegesis; (c) a highly verbose repetitiveness in securing his argument; (d) an arrogance that cursorily dispenses with all who disagree with his conclusions—or, rather, with whom he disagrees: at one point (pp. 29-30) he comes very close to saying that if even God should disagree with him, the Deity would have to be challenged; and finally (e) an overstatement at each stage of his argument, almost to the point of overkill. It may be argued that all this is an Anglo-African reaction to what must be understood as coming from a Hispanic situation and mindset, but the fact that the book has now appeared in English means that it is able to have a wider sphere of influence than merely the Spanish-speaking. English readers must be encouraged to get beyond the irritating eccentricities if they are to benefit from Miranda’s more valid insights and challenges.

The main thesis of the book is the same as that of his earlier book, *Marx and the Bible*—which I prefer over this book—namely, that “the defining characteristic of the God of the Bible is the fact that he cannot be known or loved directly; rather, to love God and to know him means to love one’s neighbor and to do one’s neighbor justice” (p. 137). One may feel that Miranda’s convoluted attempts to prove that the Johannine use of “commandment,” “works,” “saying,” and even “logos” itself are all synonymous, are somewhat overdone, and yet still feel the bite of his assertion that Christian theology has concentrated far too much on John’s philosophical antecedent and has not heard unto obedience the command to love one another as Jesus has loved us; that it is only in obedience to this that we can truly manifest our love to Jesus. And now is the time to be doing it. “The Messiah is now.” “The eschaton is present.” This is what Miranda hears John saying. To project everything into the never-never of nontemporality is to evade the issue of “the Word.” Jesus has become a historical fact, ushering in the last time of justice, equity, and resurrection, and these things in faith we must work for and claim. That is what it is to love God.

—Philip Le Feuvre

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**Correction**

In the review of Harold W. Turner’s *Bibliography of New Religious Movements in Primal Societies* in the April 1978 *Occasional Bulletin*, it was incorrectly stated that Dr. Turner had retired from the Project for the Study of Religious Movements in Primal Societies. Dr. Turner has advised us that while he has retired from teaching, he continues as an honorary Research Fellow and as Director of the Project within the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

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Philip Le Feuvre, a South African, is Director of Studies at St. Paul’s Anglican Seminary, Grahamstown, in the Cape Province, South Africa.
Theology and Mission. Papers Given at Trinity Consultation No. 1.


Theology and Mission summarizes the consultation on mission held at the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, March 1976. David J. Hesselgrave, professor of missions and director of the School of World Mission and Evangelism at Trinity, edited the material.

The Preamble, which appears in the back of the book, specifies the boundaries within which the participants worked. They were bound together by a total commitment to the inerrant Scriptures and deeply conscious of the responsibility entrusted to the church as God's agency for achieving his purpose for this age.

Hence the overall title, Theology and Mission.

The specific issues to which the participants sought to relate biblical principles, and regarding which they endeavored to consider practical implications, fell under six heads: Charismatic Theology and Neo-Pentecostalism, The Contextualization of Theology, Contemporary Evangelism and Catholicism, The Theology of Church Growth, Dialogue with the Non-Christian Religions, and Mission Strategy and Changing Political Situations.

Eighteen participants were faculty members at Trinity. Two different faculty members wrote papers on each of the subjects discussed. Afterward, two evangelical scholars and/or executives of mission agencies plus one other faculty member responded to the two addresses. Finally, the faculty members who wrote the papers replied to the respondents. All the participants, with the exception of Arthur P. Johnston who wrote one of the major papers, are identified under the title of Contributors.

The faculty members who wrote the position papers did their homework well. They present informative and well-documented material. Their footnotes are copious and worth reading.

The weakness of the book arises from the overall format of the consultation and surfaces in the responses and replies of the respondents. Since everyone was of the same mind, there is little honing of ideas. Rather than having iron sharpen iron, what appears is mutual backslapping.

Furthermore, there is a modicum of shadowboxing in the book. Several contributors suggest differences between evangelicals and nonevangelicals without specifying what the difference is. The author of one paper mentions proposals which "are already being launched for joint evangelistic ventures between evangelical Protestants and gospel-minded Catholics" (p. 131), while his

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counterpart in the next paper pens these harsh words: "Many of the churches that grew out of the Reformation have moved so far away from biblical authority and the central doctrines of Scripture that to join one of them might prove far more dangerous to an evangelically converted Catholic than to remain in his own 'Catholic' fold" (p. 151). Why did none of the respondents ask, "If pressed, could you, the author of the statement, be able to categorize the denominations which fall under your dictum? Second, if you concur with what your peer has said about 'gospel-minded Catholics,' would you be able to specify to what or to whom an evangelical Catholic should be converted?"

The ecumenical movement comes in for several jabs, too, especially in the discussion regarding interreligious dialogue. Granted, errors have been made by World Council representatives, but these have been made in the dialogue itself and have been recognized by others in the World Council. Although one appreciates Dr. Hesselgrave's candid admission that the time has come to remain in his own 'Catholic' fold, would you be able to specify to what or to whom an evangelical Catholic should be converted?"

The weakens of substantive challenge shows itself in the most crucial area of the evangelicals, namely, their interpretation of Scripture. One author writes, "The supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2 and 16) and the dynamics of the Scriptures (Hebrews 4:12) made possible effective evangelism . . ." (p. 189). He expands this by saying, "... for the Bible is living (zûn) and active (énergês) (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible is God's appointed instrument and means for the salvation and sanctification of men" (p. 200). The referent to "the Word of God" in Hebrews 4:12 may more accurately be God or even Jesus; because Hebrews 4:13 says, "and before him [the evangelicals would have to say "it"] no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him [it?] with whom [it?] we have to do."

Is significant that no respondent pitched upon this significant variant reading of a crucial text?

These two criticisms aside, Theology and Mission is worthy reading. The book indicates where thinking evangelicals are today, namely, on the road. One hopes that the day is dawning when they will dialogue, cooperate, and add their great contribution to that of other Christians in mutual esteem and respect. Many evangelicals have well-honed theological minds and Christendom will be richer if the evangelicals participate as partners with other Christians in mission rather than shadowbox in a ring where they alone do the footwork and the punching. Furthermore, the evangelicals must realize that their interpretation of Scripture may not be the only one. They too must be challenged from within the Word as to what the Word says.

—John H. Piet

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**Mandate in Moroland: The American Government of Muslim Filipinos 1899-1920.**


Peter Gowing, the director of Dansalan Research Center, Marawi City, Philippines, is the author of several scholarly works on Philippine and Philippine-American history, and probably knows the history of Muslim Filipinos (Moros) better than any other American. Mandate in Moroland, a revision of Gowing's doctoral dissertation at Syracuse University, is an important contribution on a subject badly ignored in American historiography. This book, a detailed study of American efforts to establish firm control over Moro areas in the first two decades of American rule in the Philippines, contends that although American administration was almost always high-minded it was only partially effective. There were serious deficiencies, Gowing implies, that have contributed to subsequent civil strife in the islands.

Efforts after 1903 to govern the Moros directly, instead of indirectly (as the eminent Najeeb M. Saleeby urged), was a mistake, Gowing suggests, resulting in unnecessary bloodshed. General Pershing's successful attempts to disarm the Moros was another mistake, not only because it was sometimes resisted, but more importantly because when Americans turned responsibilities over to the Christian Filipinos, the Moro was left defenseless. But the worst error was the lack of American steadfastness. Having decided to promote Christian-Muslim integration, the United States effectively abdicated its responsibilities after little more than a decade and gave (mostly Christian) Filipinos a free hand. "It is one thing to build a foundation," Gowing states, "and another to construct an edifice" (p. 314). Gowing's study is a stimulating analysis, based on thorough research primarily in American sources, but one which some Christian Filipinos will likely contest.

Important as the book is, it is not without fault. Its organization is somewhat mechanical and tedious; it makes an admirable book of reference, but it is less suited to a continuous reading. There are too many lengthy quotations. The bibliography is not entirely up to date. Though assuredly a matter of judgment and interpretation, one can question whether government officials in Moroland did not give more encouragement to the establishment of Christian missions than Gowing allows (p. 329). More serious is Gowing's repeated claim that the Philippine Bill of 1902 "formally promised eventual independence" to the Philippines (p. 202; see also p. 320). In fact that act did not promise independence, and independence was not the goal of the American administration under the Republicans. Independence was never the unequivocal goal of the Americans until 1916.

In spite of some shortcomings, Mandate in Moroland will be required reading for serious students of American colonialism; it will not soon be replaced as the standard work on the subject.

—Kenton J. Clymer
Evangelization in America:
Proclamation, Way of Life and the
Catholic Church in the United
States.

By David Bohr. New York: Paulist Press,

This study is an attempt to revitalize
the life of the Catholic Church in the
United States by developing a renewed
understanding of mission and evan­
gelization as central and fundamental
activities of the church in its local situ­
ation. The particular emphasis of the
study is to demonstrate that this task of
evangelization is more than just verbal
proclamation; evangelization, indeed,
is best carried out by the Christian
witness of a renewed moral life—
renewed in the sense that moral living
is based not on abstract philosophical
and legalistic principles but, rather, is
an integral, personal response of
shared faith lived out in hope and love.

Originally written as a doctoral
dissertation in moral theology at the
Accademia Alfonsiana in Rome, this
study by David Bohr, a priest of the
diocese of Scranton, New York, has
many of the strengths of a doctoral
work. It is very well documented; it
is as well an excellent summary statement of the contempo­
rary American context (Part III) in
which this evangelizing mission of
moral witness is to be carried out.

Bohr is not alone in his advocacy
of the comprehensive notion of
evangelization, which sees its rele­
vancy for the whole church in all par­
ticular places (Mission in Six Contin­
ets), but in this important insight
there is an inherent trap that is not
easily avoided. The easy pitfall is that
the focus of mission becomes wholly
turned inward, the goal of evangeliza­
tion becomes the revitalization of
those already explicitly Christian to the
practical exclusion of the two-thirds of
the world who are not yet Christian.

Bohr's emphasis on the need to be
evangelized in order to be evangelizers
is welcome; the context of moral living
in which he places this task makes his
book important reading for anyone
concerned with missionary activity.
The pitfall, which he does not com­
pletely avoid (cf. pp. 265, 268), is to
limit this evangelizing task to those al­
ready in the church.

—John T. Boberg, S.V.D.

John T. Boberg, S.V.D., is Associate Professor
of Mission Theology at Catholic Theological
Union in Chicago. Active in mission studies
and editing for the past seventeen years, he has
traveled in India, Japan, Taiwan, and Latin
America. He is presently First Vice-President
of the American Society of Missiology.

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loving. The transforming activity of Christ functions in many creative ways, such as the movement from resignation to the demand for justice, the struggle against oppression, and the generation of active hope for the realization of new, unforeseen possibilities. It is present whether recognized or not.

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This Christology enables Cobb to acknowledge the truth and value of a variety of religious and secular traditions "without imperialistically claim-

S. Paul Schilling is Professor of Systematic Theology Emeritus, Boston University. He served during 1969-70 as visiting professor of theology at Union Theological Seminary, Manila, Philippines.


This book serves an important function. In a day when "the only universal thing about human rights is their universal denial," there is a great need for the churches to think through clearly not only what their response should be but why they are concerned about human rights. This volume speaks to this need.

A Christian Declaration on Human Rights is a collection of essays growing out of seven years of study and discussion mandated by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches at Nairobi, Kenya, in 1970. Along with significant study papers by Jurgen Moltmann and the foreword by James I. McCord, the contributors include Margrethe B. J. Brown, James H. Cone, Jan Milič Lohman, Remko Mooi, and M. Eugene Osterhaven. Moltmann provided the original study paper on "The Theological Basis of Human Rights and of the Liberation of Human Beings" with responses from various parts of the world and concluding with Allen O. Miller's "Invitation to Study and Action." The useful appendices contain the Universal Declaration on
Human Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Helsinki Agreement; and Henry Steele Commager's "A Declaration of Interdependence."

It is fitting that this careful and deliberate volume should have been produced by the Reformed churches, for they have historically been involved in the struggles for freedom and liberation. Calvinism has provided Christianity with an ongoing source of deep theological concern for human liberation and here we have this concern reaching far beyond the largely middle-class moorings of the nineteenth century to its universal implications that include the poor, the powerless, women, and minorities.

Moltmann grounds human rights on "God's right to—i.e., his claim on—human beings, their human dignity, their fellowship, their rule over the earth and their future." Made in God's image and living before him, human beings are freed for service to God and neighbor as well as called to be stewards of creation. The Bible does not speak of human rights per se, but rather, of the righteous God who liberates his people from bondage and who calls them to respond to neighbor need. Thus the church does not merely reiterate what the United Nations, international lawyers, and various experts say about human rights, but it is called to show that the grounding of fundamental human rights is in God's claim on all human beings, regardless of their place or station in society. Further, a particularly significant part of the church's role vis-à-vis human rights is its calling to suffer for all the oppressed and to resist tyranny whatever form it takes.

—Richard L. Deats

Meditations on Saint Luke.


If you anguish with the wretched of the earth and grapple with the meaning of the incarnation, the Cross, and the resurrection, these reflections on Luke will be both stimulating and rewarding.

The author, Arturo Paoli, ordained to the priesthood in 1940 and joining the Little Brothers of Charles de Foucauld in 1955, established the first South American community of the Brothers at Fortin Olmos, Argentina in 1959. From there he served the young and the poor, and now also all those willing to be engaged in his serious analysis of selected Lucan texts and the contemporary critical human situation.

The setting is the desert—the literal desert in which the author is read-
messages based on the Gospel of Luke. The nine chapters can be read as separate units, as each begins with a specific Lucan text. These passages are not developed exegetically but, rather, topically; nevertheless some very good exegesis results. The author grasps profoundly the meaning of the incident, encounter, or parable in Luke's story and moves effectively from that world to our time and geography with refreshing and disturbing applications.

Though the texts and Paoli's divisions of the book allow the treatment of each chapter separately, the recurring theme, "the Other," certainly does not. With the author we see the people and the events depicted by Luke in a new light. That same light illuminates our industrial and economic culture, which is compelled by egoism and greed to create, produce, and fill space. The end result is a tragic and lonely "loveless economic family." But this is not Paoli's last word. With the last chapter he returns to the first chapter of Luke in which Mary's song of God's salvation rings with new meaning and hope in our broken world. To live the whole gospel and share the life of the oppressed is the biblical summons Paoli affirms.

—Henry W. Dueck

The result is a detailed and impressive account of what happened, especially during the first forty years of the period, the years of pioneering and also of failure ("more missionary graves than converts"). The description of the developments in the twentieth century, the rapid spreading of the Christian faith, and the growth of the independent Evangelical Christian Church of Irian Jaya is understandably more general. The material is arranged around the author's main concern: the possibilities and impossibilities of missionary communication in view of the realities of tribal culture and religion. His retrospective evaluations of the early missionary work are both sobering and instructive; they show clearly how the pioneers were handicapped by Christian-European prejudices with regard to "paganism" and by lack of knowledge of what they encountered. By contrast, the survey of the more recent period demonstrates that certain forms of adaptation and syncretism are inevitable and necessary for Christianity to become really indigenous. In this context, crucial missiological problems (like People's Church or conversion of individuals) receive attention, always against the background of actual developments and discussions.

The reading of this voluminous study is tiring, because the text consists to an unusually large degree of quotations from divergent sources, often amassed without a clear or consistent indication of what the author seeks to prove or illustrate. This raises the further question of what might be meant by "socio-missiological approach." No doubt many sociological (rather: cultural anthropological or ethno-sociological) and missiological problems pass in review, and the author's general concern, as indicated above, remains obvious. However, one looks in vain for a detailed indication of analyzable problems, for a clear methodological account, and for consistent analysis. This book cannot, therefore, be said to present "results" in a strictly scientific sense. Nevertheless, it is a fascinating book because of its scope and its concern, and because of the wealth of material it presents. It cannot be overlooked by anyone who is interested in further exploring the possibilities of a "socio-missiological approach."

—L. A. Hoedemaker

Dit Wonderlijke Werk.


According to the subtitle, this book deals with "the problem of communication between East and West, based on the experiences in the missionary work on New Guinea (Irian Jaya) 1885–1972," and it presents a "socio-missiological approach."

Western (formerly Dutch) New Guinea belongs to that part of the world where it has been possible to observe tribal societies in more or less "unspoiled" forms; where the confrontation between East and West has been stark and often unmitigated and unaided by existing forms of commerce and cultural interchange; and where new religious movements which absorb and simultaneously react against the western penetration come into appearance. In short, a part of the world that is fascinating for the cultural anthropologist, the historian of religion, and the missiologist. It is no small advantage, therefore, that the author of this study knows his field both as a missionary (he worked in Western New Guinea from 1931–1962) and as a professional anthropologist (see F. C. Kamma, Korerí: Messiahic Movements in the Biak-Numfor Culture Area, English ed. The Hague, 1972). Kamma seems especially qualified to attempt this "socio-missiological" survey of the history of missions in the area.

The reading of this voluminous study is tiring, because the text consists to an unusually large degree of quotations from divergent sources, often amassed without a clear or consistent indication of what the author seeks to prove or illustrate. This raises the further question of what might be
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