The Gospel and the Jewish People

Christian mission began with the Jewish people. The apostolic church in Jerusalem consisted entirely of Jews, and all the churches mentioned in Acts presumably had Jewish members. Today, however, there is much diversity and dispute among Christians over the relationship of the gospel and the Jewish people. Do the Jewish people need the gospel of Jesus Christ or not? That is the basic question.

In this issue we present two major statements from consultations representing divergent viewpoints on this question—one sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the other by the World Evangelical Fellowship. The latter, by its series of affirmations and denials, clarifies and sharpens the points of the current debate. The WCC statement, by virtue of its more generalized approach and tone, leaves the resolution of many questions to the disposition of its readers. We have invited four missionary leaders, each with experience in Christian witness among Jewish people, to critique the WCC statement.

One of the most vexing issues in twentieth-century mission endeavors from the West is the impact of affluence. On one hand, the abundance of Western resources has facilitated mission work in the furthest parts of the globe. On the other hand, maintains Jonathan Bonk, Western affluence may make it almost impossible for the messenger to tell the gospel story with credibility.

In our current series on “Mission in the 1990s,” Barbara Hendricks provides a Roman Catholic perspective informed by developments since Vatican II and her years of experience in Latin America as a Maryknoll missioner. René Padilla, also writing out of a Latin American background, follows with an evangelical viewpoint. Marc Spindler continues our “Legacy” series with his account of the career of Maurice Leenhardt, a French intellectual, known for his missiological and anthropological expertise in the South Pacific. And our “Pilgrimage in Mission” series offers Hans-Werner Gensichen’s reflections on a missiological journey from Germany, to Princeton, to Germany, to India, then back to Germany for thirty years of teaching missiology, with interludes in Africa and the United States.

A Special Occasion

The release of this issue of the INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN anticipates the forthcoming eightieth birthday of our colleague and contributing editor, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin. We take great pleasure in noting the occasion with an announcement in our opening pages.

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of Missionary Research
Mission in the 1990s: Two Views

I. Barbara Hendricks, M.M.

Recently, I spent an afternoon of shared reflection with the first-year candidates of my community, the Maryknoll Sisters Congregation. We are a missionary institute of women religious who express our Christian commitment to world mission through formal profession of the vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience. Our first year of formation has the goal of introducing the young woman to the key elements of our vocation: an apostolic, evangelical life of women religious lived out in the context of community with a simple lifestyle of insertion among the peoples of Africa, Asia, the Central Pacific, Latin America, and the United States. Within this context, the young woman experiences a shared life of interdependence and begins to explore and, it is hoped, to appropriate the call to transcultural mission with a specific option for the poor and marginalized peoples in our contemporary world.

The friendly, relaxed atmosphere of the second-story living room of the formation house contrasted radically with the scene from the window overlooking a drug-traffic corner in a poor rundown neighborhood of Newburgh, New York. The house stands in a row of ancient, decrepit frame structures, typical of the inner-city sectors of the United States, and the street scenario it faces daily reflects one of the nation’s biggest problems. But inside this particular house, new seeds for world mission are being planted and nourished.

Obedience to Mission

Our theme for the afternoon’s study was the vow of obedience. We would be looking at “obedience” from the viewpoint of our call to mission, and each one of us came with a copy of our constitutions which govern our lives and our participation in mission. Our session began, however, not with the written word, but with the silent, as yet unspoken Word of God in each one’s heart. After some minutes of silence each of us wrote a few words on a card, which expressed “obedience” for us at this point in our lives. Soon we were telling each other what obedience meant to us as Maryknoll Sisters or as candidates—seven women in the formation community and two of us who had come from our center at Maryknoll to facilitate the discussion. As each one shared her reflections, I noted the marked attentiveness that pervaded the group. Words and phrases began to flow around the room, giving me the impression that we were weaving a tapestry or composing a concerto. Obedience to Jesus and his mission was becoming a many faceted experience of brilliant colors and vibrant harmony with subtle nuances. Sometimes we had to grope for words in a “first language” and then search further to express the thought in our only common language, which was English.

The phrases and words glided around us and settled deep inside us... “discernment in community of God’s plan for the world” “faithfulness in listening to God” “self-gift to follow Jesus in his mission” “accompaniment of the poor in their journey” “to be conquered and to follow” “surrendering to love” “to listen, to do, to answer—availability” “openness, dialogue, discernment” “fidelity to and within the struggle for transformation of the world” “cooperation, openness, freedom in responding to the will of God even in suffering”

Each of us was being stretched beyond our narrow personal and cultural understanding and experience of Christian response. I glanced around me at each face and suddenly realized that this was potentially a missionary community for the twenty-first century.

In this warm, welcoming, family-style house in a drab, drug-infected neighborhood, we had an experience of “Mission in the 1990s” and beyond, into the third millennium of Christian mission. Women from six different parts of the world—Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Peru, Tanzania, the United States—were breaking through barriers of culture, language, custom, tradition, and spirituality, dispelling age-old isolation, separation, and incomprehension in a simple sharing of God’s Word alive in human hearts. We were helping each other to grow in faith, hope, and love, in and for a planetary community according to God’s plan where all peoples are loved, and love, as sisters and brothers.

The Reign of God on the Earth

Being a missionary institute within the Roman Catholic tradition, the Maryknoll Sisters have been strongly impacted by Vatican Council II, and also influenced by the theological reflections of the Third General Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi in 1961. In the decade of the 1960s, many missionaries of all Christian traditions—Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic—were already alert to the new winds of the Spirit moving in and through the pain and struggle of third-world peoples when the centers of North Atlantic Christianity began to articulate the challenges for renewal. We missionaries in Asia, Africa, the Central Pacific, and Latin America responded to the new insights concerning the nature of the church and its mission in the second half of the twentieth century. We have read and studied many of the church documents published since the 1960s and realize that our “sending” churches are becoming increasingly aware of the church as mission.

For Catholic missionaries in Latin America during the 1960s it was a time of experiencing the emergence of a new kind of church and we with it. We studied the documents of Vatican II, especially “The Church” (Lumen Gentium), “The Church in the Modern World” (Gaudium et Spes), and “The Church’s Missionary Activity” (Ad Gentes), and were filled with new theological and missiological insights. Paragraph 1 of “The Church” became an often-quoted and dearly loved refrain for us:...
The Consequences for Contemporary Mission

There are many consequences for contemporary mission in the light of a theology of mission centered on the symbol of God's reign on the earth. We are impelled to go directly to the full embodiment of the kingdom, Jesus himself and his teachings, for the criteria with which to develop our mission goals. In the light of the signs of our times, the pain and struggle in our world, to what kind of earthly reality does the kingdom point today?

Within the human situation, in the context of mission today, what is the basis for motivation, discernment, mutual support in our ministries, joy in our achievement, consolation in our failure, healing in our pain, and spiritual energy for continuing the mis-

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sion of Jesus in its transforming task in our world today? Is not the overarching reality of the “communion of disciples” the only possible answer to these questions? From my own experience of mission in Peru in the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, and in Bolivia during the 1980s, I would say that the true communion of disciples is what consolidates the community sent in mission and energizes it for witness and service. Promotion of the kingdom and its values requires a reordered set of goals for mission institutes and agencies. Along with goals for ministries of service and the preaching of the Word, we had best list some goals for the achievement of an authentic quality of community life among missionaries themselves and in the communities that they form.

The quality of life of the missionary community, the way it embodies the message of Jesus as a “kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all humankind” is the indispensable requisite for mission, and it has been so from the beginning of Christianity. The quality of life in the community is of primary importance because anything contrary to this raises questions about the authenticity of the message, and the lack of presence and activity of a local Christian community will be judged by the quality of the life out of which it emanates and the salvific witness of loving relationships out of which it is energized for the preaching of the gospel. Perhaps the most impacting characteristic of the community’s witness in the world today is servanthood. Authentic servanthood, lived out in humility and in a search for holiness, will dispose the missionary community for respectful dialogue, both ecumenical and interfaith, and for a service of liberation in a world steeped in materialism, consumerism, and secularism, and caught in the inhuman structures that reinforce the poverty of the vast majority of our brothers and sisters.

In the midst of all the anti-signs of our times, there are signs of hope. Among these we can name the growing awareness of the dignity, value, and self-direction of the human person and the relentless historical process that is reshaping the whole range of human relationships at every level of society; dominance/oppression, status/nonstatus, rich/poor, East/West, North/South, man/woman, and so forth. Faith is a gift and it is God the Giver who provides growth. The community in mission is called together to embody a sign that this historical process is directly related to God’s plan. It does this by living the reign of God within itself and within its mission as a clarifying signal of prophetic announcement of what God is doing in our world and denouncement of the obstacles to its realization.

We know that the church is becoming a world church, although this is taking place in an awkward movement of steps forward and sliding backward. No one of us can see clearly the new shape of the church of the future, at either the universal level or the local expression. We cannot describe exactly what the role of missionaries from one local church will be in service to other churches. Yet theologians, mission administrators, and even we missionaries have taken to listing and describing such things as “Trends in Mission,” “Mission in the Third Millennium,” “Key Dimensions of Mission Today,” “Mission in the 1990s,” and so on. The majority of these reflections include the following elements in some form: Option for the Poor; Ecumenical and Interfaith Dialogue; Evangelization of the Human Person in Society; Evangelization of Cultures; Liberation of Peoples from Structures of Injustice, Poverty, Oppression, and Attitudes that Reinforce These Evils; and Accompanying and Empowering Local Christian Churches in Their Missionary Development.

There is also another major dimension of the future missionary outreach that is often named, sometimes implied, but generally not explicated as the basis for all the other major dimensions and the very core of all missionary activity since the early church—the witness of the life of the missionary community, that is, the quality of community life as witness of Jesus Christ and of the kingdom Jesus preached and inaugurated on the earth. Religious meaning is mediated most fully through persons who embody the message they preach. My belief is that the community in mission is the very heart of all the other challenges to mission in the 1990s. The sacramental quality of our witness as the community of those who believe in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, as the definitive promise of the kingdom of justice, peace, and love has to be seen and touched by others so that it is an effective, visible, and living statement of our faith, hope, and love.

I belong to a missionary institute of women which was founded in the United States in 1912. In the past we have considered ourselves an American missionary movement. At present we see the growing internationality of our membership, which over the years has grown slowly to a ratio of 89 percent U.S. membership to 11 percent from other nations. We have experienced lately the need to welcome consciously this trend among us as a sign of God’s reign beckoning to the North Atlantic

Community renders the message ineffective. It would appear that the heart of Christian mission is the community of the disciples gathered in the name of Jesus precisely for the purpose of gathering others to proclaim and make actual God’s reign upon the earth. This quality of “see how they love one another” is what attracted new disciples, according to the Acts of the Apostles.

The Witness of the Missionary Community

The fidelity of the church, those called by Jesus as disciples, rests not on the numbers of people we baptize and incorporate into active membership but, rather, on the authentic following of Jesus Christ embodied in a local ecclesial community. The missionary presence and activity of a local Christian community will be the indispensable requisite for mission, and it has been so from the beginning of Christianity. The quality of life in the community is of primary importance because anything contrary to this raises questions about the authenticity of the message, and the lack of
churches to open up to the cultural and spiritual riches of the rest of the peoples of the world at a time when those of us of Western Christianity need to be evangelized by the Christians of the South and of the East. We believe that this is a sign of the future of nations in the world and those of us from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Central Pacific. It is, in fact, a challenge facing the whole church of the future.

The reorganization of missionary goals for the 1990s and beyond will, we hope, articulate the building of authentic global Christian communities as a priority for members of missionary institutes and agencies. This will be a call for conversion and liberation from all the destructive isolation and individualism that plague humankind in a time of chaotic transition toward a new era in history.

II. C. René Padilla

I can hardly think of the Christian mission in the 1990s without thinking of one of the most amazing changes that has been taking place since the beginning of this century, namely, the shift of the center of gravity of Christianity from the West to the two-thirds world. At least in part as a result of the modern missionary movement, millions and millions of people from the new nations, most of them poor, have made their debut on the stage of world Christianity. Of all the factors that will shape the life and mission of the church during the last decade of the twentieth century, this will undoubtedly be the predominant one. As Walbert Buhlmann has put it:

The Third Church has arrived. This is the major event of Church history in the near future. To sum up in a few words: the first millennium of Christianity was the age of the First Church, the Church of the east; in the second millennium the stage was held by the Second Church, the Church of the west; the forms Christianity takes in the coming third millennium will in the main be determined by the Third Church, the Church of the southern hemisphere—Latin America, Africa, Asia.” [1978:75-76]

The importance of this event should be taken to heart in relation to the following points of the missionary agenda.

1. Evangelization of the West

In this next decade much more will have to be done to find ways to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ in the West. Not only in Europe but also in the United States many churches are “going out of business.” By contrast, old religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, and new religions and sects are making their presence felt, sometimes with amazing force, in the religious scenario. In the United States, for instance, the New Age movement has a very impressive network for the dissemination of its ideas, values, and attitudes. According to a recent report, millions of copies of Shirley Maclaine’s three autobiographies have been sold, 23 percent of the population believe in reincarnation, and 25 percent believe in a nonpersonal energy or life energy but not in a personal God. This phenomenon goes a long way to show that even in a secularized society people long for transcendence.

Are Christians equipped to respond to this situation? My impression is that most churches in Europe and the United States have no, or very little, evangelistic outreach. They are mostly catering to their own internal needs. Every time I visit the United States, for instance, I find all kinds of churches engaged in big building projects that absorb a very high percentage of their budgets. Moreover, not many churches seem to be concerned about, let alone prepared to face, the kind of issues that Lesslie Newbigin has insistently raised in his most recent writings, such as Foolishness to the Greeks (1986). One does not have to agree with every detail of his diagnosis of the spiritual problems of Western society to admit that the gospel has to be presented as public truth rather than as private religious opinion. Perhaps the greatest challenge that the church has to face in the West in this next decade is to witness to God’s claim on the whole of life in the midst of a culture that has grown accustomed to the privatization of religion.

In his incisive sociological analysis of (North) American culture, Robert Bellah has pointed out that, in the United States, what he calls ontological individualism—“the idea that the individual is the only firm reality”—developed gradually as a part of the process of modernization beginning with the colonial period (1985:276). The net result of this idea is a culture of separation characterized by the fragmentation of life. The “social ecology,” says Bellah, has been damaged, and unless it is repaired, “we will destroy ourselves long before natural ecological disaster has time to be realized” (1985:284). What has failed at every point, according to him, is integration; people have been too occupied with their own private interests—freedom, wealth, and power—but have neglected the common good. What is urgently needed is a social movement working for the transformation of the social world, the recovery of a social ecology in which individual interests will be linked to the common good, including the good of the poorest nations. “We have attempted to deny the human condition in our quest for power after power,” concludes Bellah. “It would be well for us to rejoin the human race, to accept our essential poverty as a gift, and to share our material wealth with those in need” (1985:296).

From what Bellah says, two conclusions may be drawn. In the first place, it is quite clear that the restoration of the social ecology is one of the priorities of mission in the West. In the midst of a culture of separation, Christians are called to embody the love of God. Because of Jesus Christ’s work of reconciliation through his death, no social movement is better qualified than the church to break down the barriers that separate people from one another. In the second place, there is a close connection between this restoration of the social ecology in the affluent countries and obedience to God’s demand for justice to the poor. When Jesus told the rich young man to sell everything and give to the poor, he was thinking more about the spiritual need of the young man than about the material need of the poor. It is high time for Christians in the affluent countries to recognize their own poverty, to be less introvertedly concerned about the maintenance of their church institutions, and to become far more involved in the struggle for the kingdom of God and God’s justice. In the final analysis,

C. René Padilla, a contributing editor, lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He is General Secretary of the Latin American Theological Fraternity and editor of Misión, a missiological magazine in Spanish.

October 1989
the need of the hour is for a radical change from a privatized
religion that reinforces the values and attitudes prevalent in so­
ciety to a radical Christian commitment in response to Jesus' call
to discipleship: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny
himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matt: 16:24).

No one would claim that privatized religion is unknown out­
side the West. All too often, privatized religion is one way in
which the churches of the two-thirds world betray their mission­
ary origin. Despite the persistent colonialist patterns of mission­
ary work, however, much of the spiritual vitality that characterizes
the churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America is derived from
the fact that they experience faith as inseparable from social life.
Moreover, in the midst of poverty and oppression, they have intui­
tively perceived the relevance of the gospel to questions of
justice and peace. That is why their nascent theologies generally
maintain a very close link with socioeconomic and political reality.
If in this next decade the Western churches, deeply affected by
moral and spiritual decline, are to fulfill their missionary vocation,
they will have to listen to the challenge posed by those theologies;
they will have to be willing to go beyond evangelism and become

---

It is high time for Christians in the affluent
countries to recognize their own poverty.

involved in the struggle for justice and peace in their own context
and around the world. The evangelization of the West is insep­
sable from the rediscovery of the gospel as "good news to
the poor."

2. Globalization of Mission

Most missionary-minded Christians today would agree that the
gospel must be proclaimed in, from, and to all six continents. At
least I would like to think that not many continue to view mission
as moving from the "sending countries" in "the Christian
West" to the "receiving countries" in the rest of the world.
The trouble is that despite the wide recognition, in theory, of the
need for a global outlook on mission, many Western missionary
societies, in practice, continue to operate as if they were living in
the nineteenth century. All the major policies are formulated and
the most important decisions are made "at home," with little
or no input from "the mission field." No measures are taken
to have a wide cross-cultural representation on the board of the
missionary society, nor to secure the participation of "na­
tional" leaders in the decision-making processes related to plan­
ing, programming, and evaluating. Paternalism still reigns
supreme.

Never has the world been so small, nor have the means of
communication across national barriers been so efficient, as at
present. The scene is set for partnership in mission on a global
scale. The kind of global partnership that is needed, however,
will be possible only on the basis of honest recognition of cultural
differences and real willingness to learn from one another across
cultural barriers. It requires the renunciation of "a cultural
imperialism which both undermines the local culture unneces­
sarily and seeks to impose an alien culture instead." (The Willow­
tank Report, para. 5).

One main obstacle to a globalization of mission based on
partnership is the economic imbalance between churches in the
West and churches in the two-thirds world. Because of it, all too
often two assumptions are made: (1) that the role of the econom­
ically rich churches is not only to provide funds but also to design
the missionary strategy, programs, and methods for the rest of
the world; (2) that the role of the economically poor churches is
simply to receive that which is generously given to them, for
which they have nothing to offer in return. The net result of these
assumptions is the perpetuation of both missionary colonialism
and dependency. If such anomalies are to be corrected before the
third millennium, Christian leaders everywhere during the 1990s
will have to learn the meaning of interdependence within the
body of Christ. They will also have to learn that, from the per­
spective of the kingdom, financial resources are never the most
important thing that people in general, and the people of God in
particular, can share among themselves. As David Auletta has put
it, "All churches are poor in one way or another. All of
them are involved in mission and are responsible for mission. All
of them should be concerned for one another, help each other,
share with one another their resources. All the churches should
give and receive" (1974:87).

3. Integrity in Mission

In agreement with Johannes Verkuyl, a growing number of Prot­
estant Christians today would affirm that "every evangelical
(in the New Testament sense of that word) should be an ecu­
menical, and every ecumenical (in the biblical sense and also in
the sense in which it was used by the pioneers of the ecumenical
movement) should be an evangelical" (1989:56). Sad to say,
however, the polarization between "evangelicals" and "ecu­
menicals" is not decreasing but increasing. This is the case, for
instance, in Latin America, where this last decade has seen the
development of two Protestant movements, the Latin American
Council of Churches (CLAI) and the Latin American Evangelical
Fellowship (CONELA), both of which are supposedly seeking to
foster church unity. Verkuyl points out that, at a time when the
Vatican is moving more and more in the direction of a
"counter-reformation," many ecumenical Protestant churches
are more willing to cooperate with the Vatican than with Prot­
estant evangelicals (1989:56-57). If this situation seems ironic in
Europe, it is far more so in Latin America, where the Roman
Catholic "counter-reformation" is the order of the day and
where Protestant evangelicals are still oftentimes regarded as in­
truders and their evangelistic efforts are seen as nothing more
than proselytism.

A difference between "evangelicals" and "ecumeni­
cals" is clearly illustrated by two important missionary confer­
ces held in 1989: the World Conference on Mission and
Evangelism convened by the World Council of Churches Com­
misson on World Mission and Evangelization (WCC/CWME), in
San Antonio, Texas, May 22 to June 1, and Lausanne II, the In­
ternational Congress on World Evangelization convened by the
Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE), in Ma­
nila, Philippines, July 11-20. As in 1980, two conferences were
separately planned to deal with questions related to the one-world
Christian mission. The WCC/CWME conference was based on a
prayer: "Your Will Be Done: Mission in Christ’s Way."" The
LCWE conference, on the other hand, summoned the church to
engage in world evangelization: "Proclaim Christ until He
Comes: A Call to the Whole Church to Take the Whole Gospel
to the Whole World." Behind the two gatherings were two dif­
ferent approaches to mission, one stressing the social dimension

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The Churches and the Jewish People: Towards a New Understanding

Adopted at Sigtuna, Sweden, by the Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People World Council of Churches
4 November 1988

A. Preamble

We live in an age of world-wide struggle for survival and liberation. The goals of “breaking down of barriers between people and the promotion of one human family in justice and peace,” as expressed by the Basis of the World Council of Churches, constitute priorities among all people of living faiths. Through the “Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths,” adopted by the Central Committee in 1977 and 1979, the World Council of Churches has encouraged the growth of mutual respect and understanding between and among religions as an important basis for human cooperation and harmony. Christians confess that God, whom they have come to know in Jesus Christ, has created all human beings in the divine image and that God desires that all people live in love and righteousness. The search for community in a pluralistic world involves a positive acceptance of the existence and value of distinct historical communities of faith relating to one another on the basis of mutual trust and respect for the integrity of each other’s identities. Given the diversity of living faiths, their adherents should be free to “define themselves,” as well as to witness to their own gifts, in respectful dialogue with others.

While the promotion of mutual respect and understanding among people of all living faiths is essential, we as Christians recognize a special relationship between Jews and Christians because of our shared roots in biblical revelation. Paradoxically, this special relationship has often been a source of tension and alienation in history with destructive consequences for our Jewish neighbors. We believe that an honest and prayerful consideration of the ties and divergences between Jewish and Christian faiths today, leading to better understanding and mutual respect, is in harmony with the will of one living God to whom both faith communities confess obedience.

B. Historical Note

Since the end of World War II the WCC and its various agencies have shown serious, albeit periodic, concern regarding Jewish-Christian relations. The First Assembly in Amsterdam (1948) acknowledged “the special meaning of the Jewish people for Christian faith” and denounced anti-Semitism “as absolutely irreconcilable with the profession and practice of the Christian faith” and “a sin against God and man.” The Third Assembly in New Delhi (1961) reaffirmed the WCC’s previous repudiation of antisemitism and, at the same time, rejected the notion that Jews today share in guilt for the death of Christ:

In Christian teaching the historic events which led to the crucifixion of Jesus and the Jews' role in his crucifixion have been the subject of much controversy and misunderstanding. The WCC has repeatedly affirmed the continuing validity of the Christian teaching that Jesus' death did not result from Jewish criminality but from Roman imperialism and Jewish-Roman collaboration. The WCC has also affirmed the correctness of the Christian position that Jews today are not guilty of the death of Christ.

The Commission on Faith and Order at its Bristol meeting (1967) accepted and commended for further theological study a report that called for a systematic rethinking of the church's theological understanding of Judaism. This important proposal was based especially on the following points:

1) Affirmation of the continuity between the church and the Jewish people, “Christ himself [being] the ground and substance of this continuity”;
2) Affirmation of the positive significance of the continuing existence of the Jewish people as “a living and visible sign” of God’s faithfulness and love;
3) Rejection of the notion that the sufferings of the Jews are proof of any special guilt before God and recognition of guilt on the part of Christians who have persecuted Jews or have often stood on the side of the persecutors;
4) Acknowledgment that disobedience before God has in various ways marked not only Jews, as often assumed by Christians, but also Christians themselves, and that therefore both “can live only by the forgiveness of sin, and by God’s mercy”;
5) Recognition that Christians honestly disagree among themselves regarding “the continued election of the Jewish people alongside the Church” and also regarding the nature of Christian witness to Jews, whereas arrogance, paternalism, and coercive proselytism are rejected by common agreement;
6) Recommendation that misconceptions of Jewish teaching and practices in Christian instruction, preaching, and prayers or anything that may foster prejudice and discrimination against Jews, should be properly corrected.

Although the Bristol report’s call for the renewal of Christian thinking on Judaism did not receive wide attention within the WCC, constructive work continued during the 1970’s through the Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People (CCJP), resulting in the “Ecumenical Considerations on Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” a document received and commended for study and action by the Executive Committee of the WCC (1982). These “Ecumenical Considerations” pointed out that the church, in the process of defining its own theological identity, traditionally assigned to Judaism negative roles and images in the history of salvation by teaching

1) the abrogation of the Sinai Covenant,
2) the replacement of Israel as God’s people by the church,
3) the destruction of the Temple as proof of divine rejection of the Jewish people,
4) and that ongoing Judaism is a fossilized religion of legalism.

The “Ecumenical Considerations” urged a renewed study of Judaism in historical context and appreciation of the fact that Rabbinic Judaism, the Mishnah, and the Talmud have given the Jewish people spiritual power and structures for creative life through the centuries. While recognizing the diversity and differences between Jews and Christians, as well as among themselves, the “Ecumenical Considerations” also pointed out basic commonalities rooted in biblical revelation and called upon Christians (1) to see that “for Judaism the survival of the Jewish people is inseparable from its obedience to God and God’s covenant” and (2) to learn “so to preach and teach the Gospel as to make sure that it cannot be used towards contempt for Judaism and against the Jewish people.”

It is important also to note the position of Vatican II (1963–65) regarding other living faiths, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism, on the basis of the solidarity of humankind under God for the purpose of fostering unity and love among all people. With respect to the Jewish people, Vatican II stated that “the Jews still remain dear to God because of their fathers, for He does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the call He issues (cf. Rom. 11:28-29),” thus affirming the theological value of the witness of Judaism. “The Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing Nostra Aetate” (1974) also pointed out that the question of Jewish-Christian relations is intrinsic to the Church’s own self-definition, since in “pondering its own mystery” the Church encounters the “mystery of Israel.” While Vatican II held that “the Church is the new people of God” it also clearly rejected the notion that “the Jews should . . . be presented as repudiated or cursed by God, as if such views followed from the Holy Scriptures.” Vatican II expressed gratitude for the Church’s spiritual heritage received from and shared with Jews. Furthermore, Vatican II condemned all “displays of antisemitism” and admonished that:

all should take pains, lest in catechetical instruction and in the preaching of God’s word they teach anything out of harmony with the truth of the gospel and the spirit of Christ.

In recent times, a number of member churches of the WCC and/or church conferences to which they belong, following a similar direction, have issued separate official statements dealing with such topics as (1) antisemitism and the Shoah (Holocaust), (2) covenant and election, (3) the land and State of Israel, (4) the Scripture, (5) Jesus and Torah, (6) mission, and (7) common responsibilities of Jews and Christians. When examined in their totality, these statements significantly advance the Christian understanding of Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations on the basis of key points:

1) that the covenant of God with the Jewish people remains valid;
2) that antisemitism and all forms of the teaching of contempt for Judaism are to be repudiated;
3) that the living tradition of Judaism is a gift of God;
4) that coercive proselytism directed towards Jews is incompatible with Christian faith;
5) that Jews and Christians bear a common responsibility as witness to God’s righteousness and peace in the world.

The churches still struggle with the issue of the continuing role of Jesus and the mission of the church in relation to the Jewish people and with the question of the relation between the Covenant and the Land, especially in regard to the State of Israel. We need also to give attention to the self-understanding of those Jews who declare their faith in Jesus as messiah, yet consider themselves to remain Jewish.

**C. Affirmations**

In the light of the growth of the Christian understanding of...
Judaism in the past several decades, we welcome the new apprecia­tion of the faith and life of the Jewish people. We as Christians firmly hold to our confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and God (Jn. 20:28), in the creative, redemptive, and sanctifying work of the triune God, and in the universal proclamation of the gospel. We therefore feel free in Christ to make the following affirmations:

1) We believe that God is the God of all people, yet God called Israel to be a blessing to all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:3) and a light to the nations (Is. 42:6). In God’s love for the Jewish people, confirmed in Jesus Christ, God’s love for all humanity is shown.

2) We give thanks to God for the spiritual treasures we share with the Jewish people: faith in the living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 3:1-6); knowledge of the name of God and of the commandments; the prophetic proclamation of judgment and grace; the Hebrew Scriptures; and the hope of the coming kingdom. In all these we find common roots in biblical revelation and see spiritual ties that bind us to the Jewish people.

3) We recognize that Jesus Christ both binds together and divides us as Christians and Jews. As a Jew, Jesus in his ministry addressed himself primarily to Jews, affirmed the divine authority of the Scriptures and the worship of the Jewish people, and thus showed solidarity with his own people. He came to fulfill, not to abrogate, the Jewish life of faith based on the Torah and the Prophets (Mt. 5:17). Yet Jesus, by his proclamation of the dawn of the eschatological kingdom, call of disciples, interpretation of the Law, messianic claims, and above all his death and resurrection, inaugurated a renewal of the covenant resulting in the new movement of the early church, which in important ways proved also discontinuous with Judaism.

4) We affirm that, in the words of Vatican II, “what happened in his [Jesus’] passion cannot be blamed on all the Jews then living, without distinction, nor upon the Jews of today” (Nostra Aetate IV.4). We reject, as contrary to the will of God, the view that the sufferings of Jews in history are due to any corporate complicity in the death of Christ.

5) We acknowledge that the saving work of Christ gave birth to a new community of faith within the Jewish community, a fact that eventually led to tensions and polemics over the issues of the manner of incorporation of gentiles into the elect people of God and the role of the Mosaic Law as a criterion for salvation (Acts 15:1). The majority of Jews, in their understanding of Torah, did not accept the apostolic proclamation of the risen Christ. The early Christians, too, regarded themselves as faithful Jews, but in their understanding of the eschatological events, opened the doors to the gentiles. Thereby two communities of faith gradually emerged, sharing the same spiritual roots, yet making very different claims. Increasingly, their relations were embittered by mutual hostility and polemics.

6) We deeply regret that, contrary to the spirit of Christ, many Christians have used the claims of faith as weapons against the Jewish people, culminating in the Shoah, and we confess sins of word and deed against Jews through the centuries. Although not all Christians in all times and all lands have been guilty of persecution of Jews, we recognize that in the Christian tradition and its use of Scripture and liturgy there are still ideas and attitudes towards Judaism and Jews that consciously or unconsciously translate into prejudice and discrimination against Jews.

7) We acknowledge with the apostle Paul that the Jewish people have by no means been rejected by God (Rom. 11:1,11). Even after Christ, “they are [present tense] the Israelites, and to them belong [present tense] the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the worship, and the promises” (Rom. 9:4). In God’s design, their unbelief in Christ had the positive purpose of the salvation of gentiles until, in God’s good time and wisdom, God will have mercy on all (Rom. 11:11, 25, 26, 32). Gentile Christians, engrafted as wild olive shoots on the tree of the spiritual heritage of Israel, are therefore admonished not to be boastful or self-righteous toward Jews but rather to stand in awe before the mystery of God (Rom. 11:18, 20, 25, 33).

8) We rejoice in the continuing existence and vocation of the Jewish people, despite attempts to eradicate them, as a sign of God’s love and faithfulness towards them. This fact does not call into question the uniqueness of Christ and the truth of the Christian faith. We see not one covenant displacing another, but two communities of faith, each called into existence by God, each holding to its respective gifts from God, and each accountable to God.

9) We affirm that the Jewish people today is in continuation with biblical Israel and are thankful for the vitality of Jewish faith and thought. We see Jews and Christians, together with all people of living faiths, as God’s partners, working in mutual respect and cooperation for justice, peace, and reconciliation.

Notes

2. Twenty of these official statements and theological commentary on them may be found in The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People.

Responses:

David Harley

"Towards a New Understanding" is the title of this report, but what is new? Most of what it contains has been said many times before. There is the usual denunciation of anti-Semitism, the affirmation that the covenant of God with the Jewish people remains valid, and the assertion that the living tradition of Judaism is a gift of God. We have heard these things before. There is nothing new about them. What would have been new and helpful would have been an explanation of what these phrases actually mean. For example, what does it mean to say “the Covenant of God with the Jewish people remains valid”? Does it mean that the new covenant in Jesus Christ is neither relevant nor necessary for the Jewish people? Apparently Paul did not think so.

The report also affirms that “the living tradition of Ju-
Judaism? Early rabbinic Judaism? Hasidic Judaism? In a sense, Judaism is a gift of God." To which tradition is it referring? Biblical Judaism? Early rabbinic Judaism? Hasidic Judaism? In a sense, every cultural tradition can be understood as a gift from the Creator. But equally every culture must be assessed and judged by the truth God has revealed. So exactly what is meant and what is implied by saying that "the living tradition of Judaism is a gift of God"?

If we are to gain new insights and greater understanding in Jewish-Christian relationships, it would be extremely helpful to move beyond these generalizations that are so commonly expressed but so rarely explained. However, these are only introductory comments. I would like to put major emphasis on two areas of this report, the first on its Christology, the second on an example of its terminology. It is in its statement about the person of Christ that this document is at its weakest (see particularly no. 3 of the concluding affirmations). It rightly points out that as a Jew, Jesus upheld the law both in his life and in his teaching. He sought not a diminution of the ethical demands of Torah but an extension of them with greater emphasis on the inner life of the individual. He saw his ministry as being completely in line with the past history of Israel.

Yet the movement that Jesus founded proved in time to be discontinuous with rabbinic Judaism. And although the new community of faith that developed among the followers of Jesus arose within the Jewish community, it was not many years before the new wine burst the old wine skins and a permanent gulf appeared between the two groups.

So we are confronted with two communities of faith—both claiming to be legitimate expressions of continuity with the earlier history of the people of God. It is here that the implied presupposition of the statement must be questioned. The inference is that both schools of interpretation are equally valid. You pay your money and take your choice. Either you accept the view of Jesus and the New Testament or you accept the view of the other rabbis and the Talmud.

At issue here is our assessment of the person of Christ. The assumption made is that Jesus is a man, whose words though inspired carry no more authority than those of other men. If that is our Christological position, we shall indeed be happy to hold these two divergent traditions in tension and to attribute to both equal validity. But even a cursory reading of the New Testament makes it clear that the early disciples saw Jesus as being far more than a man; he was God Incarnate. That is the Christological position of the New Testament and the orthodox faith of the church. If we will, we may say that they were mistaken, we may disagree with them, but we cannot get away from the fact that this is actually what the early Christians believed.

If the apostolic faith is to be followed and a biblical Christology is to be maintained, it is not possible to place the rabbinic interpretive tradition on a par with the teaching of the Son of God. We can respect it, we can learn from it, we can avoid any inference of displacement theology, we can uphold the idea of God's ongoing love for the people of Israel, but we cannot get away from the fact that God "spoke through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son" (Heb. 1:1–2).

A second area that concerns me as I read this report is the lack of any positive reference to the possibility of Christian witness to the Jewish people. Twice the document uses the phrase "coercive proselytism": for example, "coercive proselytism directed towards Jews is incompatible with Christian faith." All, of course, would agree. Coercing anyone to do anything, compelling them against their will to do that which they would not otherwise wish to do is abhorrent. Everyone in their right mind would condemn coercive proselytism whether it is pressure brought to bear on Jews to become Christians or Christians to become Jews.

Sadly, it is true that down the centuries Christians have tried to proselytize by force. They have used social, economic, and physical pressures to compel Jews to accept a faith they did not want. Sometimes they have offered them the choice between baptism and banishment. Sometimes they have kidnapped Jewish children and baptized them only to declare that they belong no longer to their Jewish parents but to the Christian church of which they are now members.

All this is history—a tragic blot on the record of the church. But are we seriously implying that this kind of thing is going on today? Is it still the case that social, economic, or physical pressure is being brought to bear on Jews to become Christians? I am not aware of any substantiated evidence that this is so. Jewish communities living in the United States and Britain enjoy all the liberties that such Western democracies afford them. They are able to hold their own faith and pursue their own religious practices in complete freedom. They can turn off television programs that are not to their taste, they can pass by those who offer them literature on the streets, they can send away from their door any hawkers or traveling salesmen, whether they are selling shampoo or insurance or religion.

So what is meant by the phrase "coercive proselytism"? If such a phrase is to be used in a statement of a consultative group of the World Council of Churches, it requires definition and clarification. So far as I am concerned, the phrase is neither accurate nor helpful. It charges the debate with emotive nuances that have no place in serious dialogue.

If, of course, it can be substantiated that coercive proselytism is taking place and that civil or religious liberties are being violated, it would be a matter for the courts. I believe, however, that the charge of coercive evangelism is a myth that remains unsubstantiated (unless every form of Christian witness is so viewed) and that this myth is being perpetuated and used as a stick with which to beat those who, with due sensitivity and in obedience to the dominical command, seek to share the gospel with all, without excluding the Jew. Indeed I feel that if there is any danger of a curtailment on religious liberty or any coercion being brought to bear, it is in those who wish to tell Christians what they must believe and set limits on those to whom they may or may not witness.
Where is the biblical hope for Israel and for the church in the Sigtuna document?

Ole Chr. M. Kvarme

Through nine affirmations, the Sigtuna statement expresses a new appreciation of the faith and the life of the Jewish people. This appreciation and the effort to overcome anti-Jewish attitudes among Christians and in Christian theology should be welcomed. However, the "new understanding" of the document also invites some serious comments and some disturbing questions about the theological direction now taken by the Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People (CCJP) of the World Council of Churches.

My first observation in studying the Sigtuna statement is this: Compared to previous WCC documents on Jewish-Christian relations (e.g., Bristol 1967; Ecumenical Considerations, 1982), the Sigtuna affirmations say less about Jesus Christ and the implications of New Testament Christology, less about Christian witness and the mission of the church, less about Hebrew Christians/Messianic Jews, and less about the Jewish people and the land of Israel in the current situation of the Middle East.

That this profile of the statement is not a coincidence is confirmed by my second observation: It seems that the CCJP now has given a one-sided endorsement of the two-covenant theology, implying that Jewish people have their own adequate way to God within the Sinai covenant.

The Sigtuna statement emphasizes the Pauline concern that God by no means has rejected the Jewish people. However, when the continued election of the Jewish people is defined, the CCJP follows the two-covenant theology in substance and in terminology. The gradual development of "two communities of faith" is affirmed as a permanent reality when the eighth affirmations speaks about these two communities and concludes that they are "each called into existence by God, each holding to its respective gifts from God, and each accountable to God." But is this a biblical understanding of the relation between the church and the Jewish people? And is this the only possible interpretation of the continued election of the Jewish people? I would answer both questions in the negative.

The Sigtuna emphasis upon "the two communities of faith" is problematic in at least four respects:

1. With regard to the future, Where is the biblical hope for Israel and for the church in the Sigtuna document? For Paul the separation of the church of Jews and Gentiles from that part of Israel that rejected the risen Christ was not final. One day this separation will be replaced by unity in the Messiah. The chosenness of the Jewish people implied for Paul a firm hope in their future salvation in Jesus Christ, and therefore he also proclaimed the risen Messiah to his Jewish kinsmen. Should we not also today uphold this hope and this witness in a consistent ministry to Jewish people?

2. The Sigtuna emphasis upon "the two communities of faith" implies a static understanding of election, covenant and the peoplehood of God, and the New Testament. Covenant and election in the Bible are related to the faithfulness of God and to God's saving acts in history. God's act of atonement in and through Jesus Christ was not only an affirmation of the election of the Jewish people (cf. affirmations 1 and 3), but it was also the basis for the call of the apostles to their kinsmen to repent and believe in their Messiah and Savior. The people of the new covenant was never meant to be a final and static gentile entity. It represents a fellowship that not only came into being within the Jewish people (cf. affirmation 5), but which is always open to Jews and gentiles. The Sigtuna statement fails to affirm that Jesus is the Messiah for Jews and gentiles and that salvation is in Jesus Christ alone. Similarly it fails to affirm the openness of New Testament ecclesiology, which today is demonstrated by the growing number of congregations of Jewish believers in Jesus Christ. Should we not welcome this movement as a bridge between the church and the Jewish people and labor for its growth?

3. The Sigtuna emphasis upon "the two communities of faith" fails to deal in depth with the pain of current Jewish-Christian relations and the historical development of Christian and rabbinic theology alike. On the one hand, the church did develop from the early centuries mainly as a gentile entity and with an anti-Judaic identity never wanted by its Lord. Christian anti-Semitism grew as the church not only saw itself as the replacement of Israel, but as it also took the place of its Lord as the realm of salvation. This seems to demand not only efforts to overcome anti-Judaic attitudes in Christian theology and praxis (cf. affirmations 4 and 6), but a reorientation for the identity of the church, which takes into consideration the original Jewish context of the gospel, the Jewishness of the Messiah, and the permanent link of the church to the Jewish people.

On the other hand, the synagogue kept alive a significant biblical heritage, but nevertheless throughout the centuries developed an identity and a theology with a basic rejection of Jesus as Messiah, as Lord and Savior. In dialogue and encounter with Jewish people it is difficult to address the importance of this rejection for the development of rabbinic theology and the current identity of the synagogue. But it is hardly helpful to ignore this matter as it is done so often—also in the Sigtuna statement.

4. The Sigtuna document, with its emphasis upon "the two communities of faith," seems to downplay the national identity of the Jewish people, and thereby it avoids questions that should have been addressed. The so-called replacement theology is still widespread in many churches, and there is a danger that this theological attitude, coupled with anti-Israeli feelings in the current political situation, is resulting in overt anti-Jewish attitudes both in the Middle East and in other parts of the world. I presume that the wider ecumenical context prevented the CCJP from spelling out this context in its rejection of the replacement theology. However, it needs to be said that the continuing election of the Jewish people does carry implications not only for the Christian understanding of the People and the Land, but also for the struggle for justice, peace, and reconciliation in the Middle East today. One has to ask if the Sigtuna emphasis upon "the two communities of faith" does not actually imply a new replace-

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ment, equally tragic as in the old replacement theology: has the One Lord, Jesus Christ, now been replaced by two communities of faith?

The development from Bristol 1967 to the Ecumenical Considerations in 1982 to Sigtuna 1988 has been in the wrong direction. The Sigtuna statement will hardly receive the endorsement of the member-churches of the WCC, and maybe this could open up a new and fresh work on the relation between the churches and the Jewish people, which would strengthen the appreciation of the Jewish people, but which would keep the biblical perspectives in focus, and the biblical hope alive.

Arthur F. Glasser

In the preamble of the Sigtuna document we confront the overriding concern of those who drafted this statement. They want to promote “a new understanding” on the part of the churches toward the Jewish people. There should be “mutual respect” between these two religious groups, because cooperation and harmony are essential if justice and peace are to be promoted worldwide. They affirm that “God desires that all people live in love and righteousness.” On this apparently laudable basis, Christians should lock arms with Jews and together participate in the “worldwide struggle for survival and liberation.”

As a Christian, I am glad that I can look back to the 1960s when with Jews and blacks I marched in the Civil Rights struggle. There is much that Jews and Christians can do together today to ameliorate the ills of society. They should unitedly seek to further social justice, particularly in the Middle East. But what of the clear witness of Scripture that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4)? The preamble doesn’t mention this.

We are called to reflect on past steps taken by the WCC and its various agencies to express their concern regarding the Jewish people. Having already studied these statements, I am struck by the highly selective way in which this document refers to them.

This WCC document is indulging in theological schizophrenia.

The Amsterdam Assembly (1948) forthrightly denounced anti-Semitism. The churches must continue to do this. They should with humility and dogged persistence keep reminding themselves of their tragic record, particularly from the fourth century onward when they capitulated to state control and endorsed, even furthered, hostile acts against the Jewish people. But Amsterdam’s extensive report on “The Christian Approach to the Jews” devoted only a few lines to denouncing anti-Semitism. It was largely concerned that churches “include the Jewish people in their evangelistic task.” The new document doesn’t mention this. I wondered why, then recalled that between Amsterdam (1948) and the Bristol statement (1967) considerable difference in opinion began to surface in WCC circles over the Jews. Despite the WCC Basis for membership (“a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures”), the authority of Jesus Christ does not appear to have been sought to resolve this tension. Indeed, since Bristol, CCJP documents and discussions have moved markedly away from the obvious implications of the Basis. In fact, it is now confidently affirmed in The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People (WCC, 1988) that “the next step may be to proscribe all proselytism of Jews” (p. 186)! Christians should not bear witness to Jews. Presumably it is not in good taste. Such groups as Jews for Jesus mar Christian-Jewish relations.

One dominant thrust of the Bristol statement is heartily endorsed in the text before us. Rabbinic Judaism must be “appreciated” for its “basic commonalities” and “theological value.” Christians should recognize that “the living tradition of Judaism is a gift of God” and be “thankful for the vitality of Jewish faith and thought.” I for one cannot but respect the Jewish Talmudic ideal that every Jew should be literate and should study the law of God, so that no Jew would have to turn, at any point of indecision, to a human authority. Jewish ethical concerns are outstanding. As a result, I share the anguish of Israeli soldiers today who have been shaped by this ideal but who in their embattled confrontation with Arab teenagers tend to forget this law and abruptly mete out retribution.

Even so, no case can be made for the theological validity of both Christianity and Judaism. In the Old Testament the Sinai covenant was given to Israel to point the way to the knowledge of God—the God who alone can save the people. By itself the covenant was nonsalvific, but when it was accepted, the Israelites entered into the possibility of corporate relationship with God, and a new world of individual possibilities opened to those who believed. By the covenant’s inclusion of the moral law, Israelites were made aware of what a holy God calls sin. By its provision of a mediating priesthood, those who sinned found advocacy before God. Furthermore, the covenant encouraged the penitent to accept the propitiation made possible through its sacrificial system. Indeed, repentant Israelites could know acceptance with God and restoration to fellowship with God by this sequence of law, priesthood, sacrifice, and faith. Christians see in the claims and work of Jesus Christ the culmination of this revelation of God: the holy standard, mediatorial priesthood, vicarious sacrifice, and the possibility of spiritual transformation.

In contrast, Judaism for all its laudable qualities, is diametrically opposed to the Christian faith. It contends, in contrast with the Sinaic revelation, that neither mediator nor sacrifice is needed to gain acceptance with God and to worship God acceptably. Radical salvation is unnecessary. This WCC document is indulging in theological schizophrenia when it assumes that God is pleased with both biblical Christianity and rabbinic Judaism, and is indifferent to whether salvation is by faith in Christ or by self-effort apart from Christ.
But this document overlooks another issue. Did not Jesus say to the Jews: “I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed My voice. So there shall be one flock, one Shepherd” (Jn. 10:16)? As a result, was it not one of Jesus' great redemptive achievements to bring Jews and non-Jews together into a new unity? “He is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility... that He might create in Himself one new and non-Jews together into a new unity? “He is our peace, shall be one flock, one Shepherd” (Eph. 2:13–16). How can the WCC contend that God's ideal for these two religious communities is that they coexist side by side—one for gentiles and the other for Jews?

The concluding “affirmations” of this document cover considerable diversity. True, the continued existence of the Jewish people is an irrefutable demonstration of the faithfulness of the God of Israel. It was said long years ago that only if sun and moon were to disappear would “the descendants of Israel cease from being a nation before Me for ever” (Jer. 31:36). God has not finished with dealing with Israel “after the flesh.” Israel’s Day of Yahweh has yet to take place. The Sinaitic covenant is inviolable; it has not been abrogated but, rather, “completed” by Jesus Christ (Matt. 5:17–18). The “new” covenant promised by God in the Old Testament (Jer. 31:31–34, etc.) and inaugurated by Christ is not called “new” because it is different from the first, for this would make God speak in contradictory terms. Its newness doesn’t refer to substance, but to change of method or procedure: the “old” inscribed on the tables of the law, the “new” on the hearts of God's people. Through Christ it has been enlarged to become a universal faith. But this does not mean that Paul didn’t regard it essential for individual Jews to put their faith in Jesus Christ even though he affirmed that as a people they have not been rejected by God. Why must this document quote so selectively from Romans 9 and 11 and make no mention of Paul’s burden for their personal salvation in Romans 10?

True, Jews living today are no more responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus than Christians today are responsible for the Nazi death camps. And thank God all are agreed that the word “coercion” has no place in Christian evangelism. But why the implication that “coercive proselytism” is still a threat to the Jewish people? This term is a vestigial problem from the Middle Ages. I know of no Christian witness anywhere in the world today whose evangelistic activity even remotely justifies being so criticized. I wish that this document rebuked the use of this term to denigrate any effective witness of the gospel among the Jewish people.

The sheer diversity of other themes makes this a “wisy-washy” type of document. Actually, one can find whatever one wants to find, but this is overshadowed by many sentences designed to condition Christians to leave the Jews as they are, and not seek to speak to them of their Messiah. Hence, we must ask: Should not the person and work of Jesus Christ be seen as crucial to any “new understanding” of the churches and the Jewish people? This document does not grant Jesus Christ this central role.

What is needed is an evaluation of this WCC statement by Hebrew Christians. It would bring balance to our thought. It would introduce us to something the average gentle Christian knows nothing about: the long and painful history of Hebrew Christianity, from the first century to the present. How Jews who believed in Jesus have been regarded by both synagogue and church. This hostility began in Jesus’ day. We recall the fear of the parents of the man born blind whom Jesus healed: “That if any one should confess Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue” (Jn. 10:22). We would learn of Birkat ha-minim, the synagogue’s early maladiction on all Jewish believers. We will learn that for almost one hundred years, from Pentecost to the Bar Kokhba War (A.D. 132–35), Jews who believed in Jesus were still called “Jews” by the larger Jewish community—although treated with growing hostility. Only after this debacle were Jewish believers finally and contemptuously ostracized from their people. We would then be reminded that when the church was dominated by the state (from the fourth century onward), it sought to re-erect the “dividing wall of hostility” done away by Christ (Eph. 2:14). As a result, the church has almost always been hostile to Jewish believers, particularly when they wanted to form their own “messianic” congregations and thereby preserve their own cultural roots—something all missiologists today regard as valid and biblical. Furthermore, the synagogue never wavered from its illegitimate determination to regard them as non-Jews. Why? Because their quest for contact with the living God made them turn from rabbinic Judaism to Jesus Christ, and because they had the courage to speak openly of their faith in Jesus. Yes, only Hebrew Christians are really in a position to provide a balanced appraisal of this disappointing document. They will undoubtedly raise the final question that if Judaism can manage without Christ, as the document avers, do the churches really need him? After all, when churches see in Jesus only a model of Jewish ethical achievement, what is to distinguish them from synagogues? And if this is all they can say about Jesus, why bother trying to evangelize the world?

Richard R. De Ridder

There is so much that is good in this Sigtuna report that one hesitates to be negative, but unfortunately the report has not escaped the pitfalls of other similar attempts. No one can dispute the need to seek cooperation, mutual respect, and understanding among peoples of differing faiths. However, the attempt to bring about understanding and appreciation should not be allowed to compromise the essential Christian message.

The apostolic affirmation is still the standard of the Christian church: “There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12; see also Acts 15:11). This cardinal affirmation of the early church (spoken initially to a Jewish audience) has always retained its divinely revealed, universal imperative that all persons everywhere, gentiles as well as Jews, are under a divinely given imperative to place their hope...
of salvation in Jesus Christ alone. It is clear from the New Testament record that the early church acted in harmony with this imperative. The apostles and believers went everywhere preaching the good news to Jew and gentile alike. They offered no compromise, no alternative, to faith in Jesus.

The statement covers old ground and presumes to do so in a new way. Unfortunately there is little advance over what has been affirmed in past statements and affirmations referred to and quoted in this statement. The Bristol report referred to, for example, lays a heavy burden of guilt upon the Christian community for the past sins of the church in the treatment of the Jews. Why the church today is accused of being guilty for what the fathers have done is a mystery to me.

The Bristol report is quoted to the effect “that Christians honestly disagree among themselves regarding ‘the continued election of the Jewish people alongside the church’” (italics added). There is no “honesty” involved in affirming a continued election “alongside” the church. The mystery of God’s grace that gentiles and Jews both share in the one salvation has not negated God’s special care for his covenant people, nor has it abrogated his covenant with them. “God has not rejected his people” is still a valid watchword for Jew and gentile. The mystery is not solved by declaring that God has initiated a kind of “two-covenant” scheme for salvation: one for the Jew initiated at Sinai; the other for the gentile and resting on the foundation of the work of Jesus Christ. The church, according to the Scriptures, is a divinely established community of faith in Christ comprising both Jew and gentile, between whom the middle wall of partition has been broken down. It is precisely on this point that the kind of affirmation made in this report is disturbing. Whatever barriers remain between Jew and gentile Christian, they are made and erected by human beings. Christians engaged in dialogue with Jews may never surrender this fundamental truth: the wall of partition that once separated Jew and gentile has been and remains broken down. God broke down the wall in Christ. It would prove far more acceptable to begin with this affirmation and inquire why human barriers exist and how they can be broken down so that progress can be made in achieving cooperation and harmony between the two faith communities.

It is difficult to disagree with affirmations made by the statement produced by the consultat held in Sigtuna, Sweden, if all parties read the affirmations in the same way. The role of the Jewish people (Gen. 12:3) was indeed God’s way of bringing blessing to the nations through Abraham and his seed. It is also true that God’s love for the Jewish people was confirmed in Jesus Christ and that through Christ God showed divine love for all humanity. There are common roots and spiritual ties between Christians and Jews. The church from its beginning affirmed its debt to the Jews and resisted all attempts to omit the Hebrew Scriptures from its canon.

Problems arise with the affirmations when it is said that “the saving work of Christ gave birth to a new community of faith within the Jewish community” and (at a later point in this document) that “we see not one covenant displacing another, but two communities of faith, each called into existence by God, each holding its respective gifts from God, and each accountable to God.” There precisely lies the pitfall into which one can so easily fall. That there are two communities cannot be denied. That they differ from one another is also a fact. That both share a kind of continuity may not be doubted. But to imply that this is God-willed and God-ordained goes beyond what the Scriptures allow us to affirm as Christians. God’s will is clearly displayed in that the Christian Jew and the Christian gentile both find their reconciliation, first with God, and then with one another. That is only possible on the basis of the work that Jesus Christ finished on the cross.

The answer to the mystery of continued Jewish existence is to be found in the gracious provision of God that all Israel will be saved and that God has not rejected his people as though there is no hope for salvation left to them. We gentile Christians must become much more aware of the fact that our salvation is accomplished through our being grafted by God in Christ into the olive tree. Jews are not saved apart from the gentiles, and gentiles are not saved apart from the Jews. There is only one valid community. They go hand in hand into the kingdom of God.

Richard R. De Ridder, a minister of the Christian Reformed Church, served as a missionary in Sri Lanka and as professor of missions at Calvin Theological Seminary. Since his retirement from Calvin Seminary in 1987 he has been serving as Dean and Professor at International Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. His doctoral dissertation at the Free University of Amsterdam was published under the title “Discipling the Nations,” has gone through four editions, and has been used as a text in more than twenty seminaries and schools.

Jews are not saved apart from the gentiles, and gentiles are not saved apart from the Jews.
The Willowbank Declaration on the Christian Gospel and the Jewish People

World Evangelical Fellowship

The Gospel is the power of God for salvation, to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek [Romans 1:16].

Preamble

Every Christian must acknowledge an immense debt of gratitude to the Jewish people. The Gospel is the good news that Jesus is the Christ, the long-promised Jewish Messiah, who by his life, death and resurrection saves from sin and all its consequences. Those who worship Jesus as their Divine Lord and Saviour have thus received God’s most precious gift through the Jewish people. Therefore they have compelling reason to show love to that people in every possible way.

Concerned about humanity everywhere, we are resolved to uphold the right of Jewish people to a just and peaceful existence everywhere, both in the land of Israel and in their communities throughout the world. We repudiate past persecutions of Jews by those identified as Christians, and we pledge ourselves to resist every form of anti-Semitism. As the supreme way of demonstrating love, we seek to encourage the Jewish people, along with all other peoples, to receive God’s gift of life through Jesus the Messiah, and accordingly the growing number of Jewish Christians brings us great joy.

In making this Declaration we stand in a long and revered Christian tradition, which in 1980 was highlighted by a landmark statement, “Christian Witness to the Jewish People,” issued by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. Now, at this Willowbank Consultation on the Gospel and the Jewish People, sponsored by the World Evangelical Fellowship and supported by the Lausanne Committee, we reaffirm our commitment to the Jewish people and our desire to share the Gospel with them.

This Declaration is made in response to growing doubts and widespread confusion among Christians about the need for, and the propriety of, endeavors to share faith in Jesus Christ with Jewish people. Several factors unite to produce the uncertain state of mind that the Declaration seeks to resolve.

The holocaust, perpetrated as it was by leaders and citizens of a supposedly Christian nation, has led to a sense in some quarters that Christian credibility among Jews has been totally destroyed. Accordingly, some have shrunk back from addressing the Jewish people with the Gospel.

Some who see the creation of the state of Israel as a direct fulfillment of biblical prophecy have concluded that the Christian task at this time is to “comfort Israel” by supporting this new political entity, rather than to challenge Jews by direct evangelism.

I. The Demand of the Gospel

ARTICLE 1.1

We affirm that the redeeming love of God has been fully and finally revealed in Jesus Christ.

We deny that those without faith in Christ know the full reality of God’s love and of the gift that he gives.

ARTICLE 1.2

We affirm that the God-given types, prophecies and visions of salvation and shalom in the Hebrew Scriptures find their present and future fulfillment in and through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who by incarnation became a Jew and was shown to be the Son of God and Messiah by his resurrection.

We deny that it is right to look for a Messiah who has not yet appeared in world history.
ARTICLE I.3
WE AFFIRM THAT Jesus Christ is the second person of the one God, who became a man, lived a perfect life, shed his blood on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for human sins, rose bodily from the dead, now reigns as Lord, and will return visibly to this earth, all to fulfill the purpose of bringing sinners to share eternally in his fellowship and glory.
WE DENY THAT those who think of Jesus Christ in lesser terms than these have faith in him in any adequate sense.

ARTICLE I.4
WE AFFIRM THAT all human beings are sinful by nature and practice, and stand condemned, helpless and hopeless, before God, until the grace of Christ touches their lives and brings them to God’s pardon and peace.
WE DENY THAT any Jew or Gentile finds true peace with God through performing works of law.

ARTICLE I.5
WE AFFIRM THAT God’s forgiveness of the penitent rests on the satisfaction rendered to his justice by the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.
WE DENY THAT any person can enjoy God’s favor apart from the mediation of Jesus Christ, the sin-bearer.

ARTICLE I.6
WE AFFIRM THAT those who turn to Jesus Christ find him to be a sufficient Saviour and Deliverer from all the evil of sin: from its guilt, shame, power, and perversity; from blind defiance of God, debasement of moral character, and the dehumanizing and destructive self-assertion that sin breeds.
WE DENY THAT the salvation found in Christ may be supplemented in any way.

ARTICLE I.7
WE AFFIRM THAT faith in Jesus Christ is humanity’s only way to come to know the Creator as Father, according to Christ’s Own Word: “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).
WE DENY THAT any non-Christian faith, as such, will mediate eternal life with God.

II. The Church of Jews and Gentiles
ARTICLE II.8
WE AFFIRM THAT through the mediation of Jesus Christ, God has made a new covenant with Jewish and Gentile believers, pardoning their sins, writing his law on their hearts by his Spirit, so that they obey him, giving the Holy Spirit to indwell them, and bringing each one to know him by faith in a relationship of trustful gratitude for salvation.
WE DENY THAT the blessings of the New Covenant belong to any except believers in Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE II.9
WE AFFIRM THAT the profession of continuing Jewish identity, for which Hebrew Christians have in the past suffered at the hands of both their fellow Jews and Gentile church leaders, is consistent with the Christian Scriptures and with the nature of the church as one body in Jesus Christ in which Jews and non-Jews are united.
WE DENY THAT it is necessary for Jewish Christians to repudiate their Jewish heritage.

ARTICLE II.10
WE AFFIRM THAT Gentile believers, who at present constitute the great bulk of the Christian church, are included in the historically continuous community of believing people on earth which Paul pictures as God’s olive tree (Rom. 11:13–24).
WE DENY THAT Christian faith is necessarily non-Jewish, and that Gentiles who believe in Christ may ignore their solidarity with believing Jews, or formulate their new identity in Christ without reference to Jewishness, or decline to receive the Hebrew Scriptures as part of their own instruction from God, or refuse to see themselves as having their roots in Jewish history.

III. God’s Plan for the Jewish People
ARTICLE III.12
WE AFFIRM THAT Jewish people have an ongoing part in God’s plan.
WE DENY THAT indifference to the future of the Jewish people on the part of Christians can ever be justified.

ARTICLE III.13
WE AFFIRM THAT prior to the coming of Christ it was Israel’s unique privilege to enjoy a corporate covenantal relationship with God, following upon the national redemption from slavery, and involving God’s gift of the law and of a theocratic culture; God’s promise of blessing to faithful obedience; and God’s provision of atonement for transgression. We affirm that within this covenant relationship, God’s pardon and acceptance of the penitent which was linked to the offering of prescribed sacrifices rested upon the fore-ordained sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
WE DENY THAT covenantal privilege alone can ever bring salvation to impenitent unbelievers.

ARTICLE III.14
WE AFFIRM THAT much of Judaism, in its various forms, throughout contemporary Israel and today’s Diaspora, is a development out of, rather than an authentic embodiment of, the faith, love and
hope that the Hebrew Scriptures teach.

WE DENY THAT modern Judaism with its explicit negation of the divine person, work, and Messiahship of Jesus Christ contains within itself true knowledge of God’s salvation.

ARTICLE III.15

WE AFFIRM THAT the biblical hope for Jewish people centers on their being restored through faith in Christ to their proper place as branches of God’s olive tree from which they are at present broken off.

WE DENY THAT the historical status of the Jews as God’s people brings salvation to any Jew who does not accept the claims of Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE III.16

WE AFFIRM THAT the Bible promises that large numbers of Jews will turn to Christ through God’s sovereign grace.

WE DENY THAT this prospect renders needless the active proclamation of the gospel to Jewish people in this and every age.

ARTICLE III.17

WE AFFIRM THAT anti-Semitism on the part of professed Christians has always been wicked and shameful and that the church has in the past been much to blame for tolerating and encouraging it and for condoning anti-Jewish actions on the part of individuals and governments.

WE DENY THAT these past failures, for which offending Gentile believers must ask forgiveness from both God and the Jewish community, rob Christians of the right or lessen their responsibility to share the Gospel with Jews today and for the future.

ARTICLE III.18

WE AFFIRM THAT it was the sins of the whole human race that sent Christ to the cross.

WE DENY THAT it is right to single out the Jewish people for putting Jesus to death.

IV. Evangelism and the Jewish People

ARTICLE IV.19

WE AFFIRM THAT sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with lost humanity is a matter of prime obligation for Christian people, both because the Messiah commands the making of disciples and because love of neighbor requires effort to meet our neighbor’s deepest need.

WE DENY THAT any other form of witness and service to others can excuse Christians from laboring to bring them to faith in Christ.

ARTICLE IV.20

WE AFFIRM THAT the church’s obligation to share saving knowledge of Christ with the whole human race includes the evangelizing of Jewish people as a priority: “To the Jew first” (Rom. 1:16).

WE DENY THAT dialogue with Jewish people that aims at nothing more than mutual understanding constitutes fulfillment of this obligation.

ARTICLE IV.21

WE AFFIRM THAT the concern to point Jewish people to faith in Jesus Christ, which the Christian church has historically felt and shown, was right.

WE DENY THAT there is any truth in the widespread notion that evangelizing Jews is needless because they are already in covenant with God through Abraham and Moses and so are already saved despite their rejection of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

ARTICLE IV.22

WE AFFIRM THAT all endeavors to persuade others to become Christians should express love to them by respecting their dignity and integrity at every point, including parents’ responsibility in the case of their children.

WE DENY THAT coercive or deceptive proselytizing, which violates dignity and integrity on both sides, can ever be justified.

ARTICLE IV.23

WE AFFIRM THAT it is unchristian, unloving, and discriminatory, to propose a moratorium on the evangelizing of any part of the human race, and that failure to preach the Gospel to the Jewish people would be a form of anti-Semitism, depriving this particular community of its right to hear the Gospel.

WE DENY THAT we have sufficient warrant to assume or anticipate the salvation of anyone, who is not a believer in Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE IV.24

WE AFFIRM THAT the existence of separate churchly organizations for evangelizing Jews, as for evangelizing any other particular human group, can be justified pragmatically, as an appropriate means of fulfilling the church’s mandate to take the Gospel to the whole human race.

WE DENY THAT the depth of human spiritual need varies from group to group so that Jewish people may be thought to need Christ either more or less than others.

V. Jewish-Christian Relations

ARTICLE V.25

WE AFFIRM THAT dialogue with other faiths that seeks to transcend stereotypes of them based on ignorance, and to find common ground and to share common concerns, is an expression of Christian love that should be encouraged.

WE DENY THAT dialogue that explains the Christian faith without seeking to persuade the dialogue partners of its truth and claims is a sufficient expression of Christian love.
The Manila Manifesto (Excerpt)

Second Lausanne International Congress on World Evangelization

The Second International Congress on World Evangelization, "Lausanne II," held in Manila, Philippines, July 11-20, 1989, brought together more than 4,000 participants representing about 170 nations. Included were sixty-six representatives from a dozen Soviet republics, from both registered and unregistered churches. Congress planners were disappointed that political turmoil in Mainland China made it impossible for a contingent of 300 Chinese Christians to be present.

A task forced headed by John R.W. Stott produced "The Manila Manifesto," reflecting the substance of plenary addresses and input from many of the special interest tracks.

Twenty-One Affirmations

1. We affirm our continuing commitment to the Lausanne Covenant as the basis of our cooperation in the Lausanne movement.
2. We affirm that in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments God has given us an authoritative disclosure of his character and will, his redemptive acts and their meaning, and his mandate for mission.
3. We affirm that the Bible is God's enduring message to our world, and we determine to defend, proclaim and embody it.
4. We affirm that human beings, though created in the image of God, are sinful and guilty, and lost without Christ, and that this truth is a necessary preliminary to the gospel.
5. We affirm that the Jesus of history and the Christ of glory are the same person, and that this Jesus Christ is absolutely unique, for he alone is God incarnate, our sinbearer, the conqueror of death and the coming judge.
6. We affirm that on the cross Jesus Christ took our place, bore our sins and died our death; and that for this reason alone God freely forgives those who are brought to repentance and faith.
7. We affirm that other religions and ideologies are not alternative paths to God, and that human spirituality, if unredeemed by Christ, leads not to God but to judgment, for Christ is the only way.
8. We affirm that we must demonstrate God's love visibly by caring for those who are deprived of justice, dignity, food and shelter.
9. We affirm that the proclamation of God's kingdom of justice and peace demands the denunciation of all injustice and oppression, both personal and structural; we will not shrink from this prophetic witness.
10. We affirm that the Holy Spirit's witness to Christ is indispensable to evangelism, and that without his supernatural work neither new birth nor new life is possible.
11. We affirm that spiritual warfare demands spiritual weapons, and that we must both preach the word in the power of the Spirit, and pray constantly that we may enter into Christ's victory over the principalities and powers of evil.
12. We affirm that God has committed to the whole church and every member of it the task of making Christ known throughout the world; we long to see all lay and ordained persons mobilized and trained for this task.
13. We affirm that we who claim to be members of the Body of Christ must transcend within our fellowship the barriers of race, gender and class.
14. We affirm that the gifts of the Spirit are distributed to all God's people, women and men, and that their partnership in evangelization must be welcomed for the common good.
15. We affirm that we who proclaim the gospel must exemplify it in a life of holiness and love; otherwise our testimony loses its credibility.
16. We affirm that every Christian congregation must turn itself outward to its local community in evangelistic witness and compassionate service.
17. We affirm the urgent need for churches, mission agencies and other Christian organizations to cooperate in evangelism and social action, repudiating competition and avoiding duplication.

The first Lausanne Congress, which took place in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974, produced the Lausanne Covenant, which has guided and united many evangelicals in the task of world evangelization.

Highlights of "The Manila Manifesto" are represented in its introductory section titled "Twenty-One Affirmations." The INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN reprints here the affirmations and an excerpt from the main text of the Manifesto dealing with the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.
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18. We affirm our duty to study the society in which we live, in order to understand its structures, values and needs, and so develop an appropriate strategy of mission.

19. We affirm that world evangelization is urgent and that the reaching of unreached peoples is possible. So we resolve during the last decade of the twentieth century to give ourselves to these tasks with fresh determination.

20. We affirm our solidarity with those who suffer for the gospel, and will seek to prepare ourselves for the same possibility. We will also work for religious and political freedom everywhere.

21. We affirm that God is calling the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world. So we determine to proclaim it faithfully, urgently and sacrificially, until He comes.

The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ

We are called to proclaim Christ in an increasingly pluralistic world. There is a resurgence of old faiths and a rise of new ones. In the first century too there were "many gods and many lords' (1 Cor. 8:5). Yet the apostles boldly affirmed the uniqueness, indispensability and centrality of Christ. We must do the same.

Because men and women are made in God's image and see in the creation traces of its Creator, the religions which have arisen do sometimes contain elements of truth and beauty. They are not, however, alternative gospels. Because human beings are sinful, and because "the whole world is under the control of the evil one" (1 John 5:19), even religious people are in need of Christ's redemption. We, therefore, have no warrant for saying that salvation can be found outside Christ or apart from an explicit acceptance of his work through faith.

It is sometimes held that in virtue of God's covenant with Abraham, Jewish people do not need to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. We affirm that they need him as much as anyone else, that it would be a form of anti-Semitism, as well as being disloyal to Christ, to depart from the New Testament pattern of taking the gospel to "the Jew first..." We therefore reject the thesis that Jews have their own covenant which renders faith in Jesus unnecessary...

In the past we have sometimes been guilty of adopting towards adherents of other faiths attitudes of ignorance, arrogance, disrespect and even hostility. We repent of this. We nevertheless are determined to bear a positive and uncompromising witness to the uniqueness of our Lord, in his life, death and resurrection, in all aspects of our evangelistic work including inter-faith dialogue.

Noteworthy

Personalia

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali has been appointed as General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, Britain's largest missionary society. He will succeed Bishop Harry Moore who is retiring early in 1990. This is the first time in the CMS's 190-year history that a Christian from outside of Britain has been appointed to the senior executive position. Nazir-Ali was Bishop of Raiwind in the Church of Pakistan from 1984 to 1986, when he became Assistant to the Archbishop of Canterbury. He has authored two books: Islam: A Christian Perspective (1982) and Frontiers in Christian-Muslim Encounter (1987).

Dellanna West O'Brien, a former missionary to Indonesia, who is President of International Family and Children's Educational Services in Richmond, Va., has been elected national Executive Director of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union in Birmingham, Alabama. O'Brien succeeds Carolyn Weatherford, who retired September 1st after 15 years in the post.

James Stamoolis has been appointed Dean of Wheaton College Graduate School, Wheaton, Illinois. During 1981-89 he served as Theological Students' Secretary of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. He is the author of Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today (1986) based on his doctoral dissertation at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa.

After serving the Assemblies of God as Executive Director of its Division of Foreign Missions for 30 years, Philip Hogan will retire from that position at the end of 1989. Elected to replace him is Loren Triplet, currently field director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Announcing

The United States Catholic Mission Association will hold its annual mission conference at the Hyatt Lisle Hotel, near Chicago, November 3-5, 1989. The theme of the conference, "Cry of the Earth: Challenge to Global Mission," will focus on the ecological crisis and how missionaries can foster stronger bonds in the human community with a deeper sense of interdependence with the environment. For further information, write to Fr. Joseph Lang, M.M., Executive Director, USCMA, 3029 4th Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017.
My Pilgrimage in Mission

Hans-Werner Gensichen

When does a pilgrimage in mission begin? Obviously it is part of an individual’s life story and should as such fit into its duration. Yet the shaping of a career may also be determined partly by preliminary influences, which, though working in largely concealed ways, may in retrospect be registered as pointers toward future developments.

Forebears

In September 1708, two years after the first messengers of the Danish-Halle Lutheran mission had begun their work in Tranquebar, South India, Laurentius Gensichen, a pastor in Berlin, Prussia, wrote a letter to that little group of pioneers, commending them for their evangelistic activities and assuring them of his intercession. With the letter he enclosed a donation for newly converting “Malabarian” converts, expressing the hope that eventually all pagans in India might be won for Christ. He could not know that about seventy-five years later one of his grandchildren, Maria Sabina Christina Gensichen, would arrive in Tranquebar—not herself a missionary but a missionary’s bride. She died soon afterward, in 1790, and was buried in the mission cemetery next to the New Jerusalem Church, built by the pioneer missionary Ziegenbalg in 1719. Her tombstone may still have been there when, another one-and-one-half centuries later, another descendant of Laurentius Gensichen established himself next door to the old cemetery, actually in what had been Ziegenbalg’s first home 250 years before. Only much later did I learn that other members of the tribe had been there before me.

To be sure, I had a grandfather who was a director of the Berlin Missionary Society, a friend of Gustav Warneck’s, who also attended the Edinburgh conference of 1910. Two of his daughters were married to missionaries, one in China, the other one in South Africa. But how compelling a heritage could that be to a young man such as myself, who, in 1945, had just scraped through the hazards of the Third Reich and Hitler’s world war? My admission to theological studies at Leipzig University in spring 1933 coincided almost to a day with the Nazi seizure of power in Germany. If there had been any doubts as to the meaning of such a coincidence, they were soon dispelled when my father was literally carried from his Leipzig church pulpit to the Gestapo prison. Thank God there were academic teachers who alerted their students to recognize the signs of the times—among them the Jew, Joachim Wach, whom I would meet four years later as a refugee on the boat to the United States and again, after the war, shortly before his death, in India. From people such as these even first-year students could learn the elementary lesson that “obeying God rather than men” was to be the order of the day even in matters that seemed to be trivial.

Naturally this implied a different order of priorities in theological studies as well. It is fair to say that under the pressure of everyday experience in Nazi Germany the concern for missions, for matters of the world church in the widest sense, did not figure prominently on the agenda. After some initial hesitation, the Nazi authorities, while outwardly advocating a kind of “positive Christianity” and a German national church, had decided that missions were an anachronism and therefore to be neither supported nor openly opposed. There were means and ways of quietly choking them to death, for example, by restricting the supply of foreign currency, refusing exit permits for mission personnel, or gradually allowing most of the few existing lecturerships or chairs of mission to fade away. How much sense did it make under the circumstances to discuss the nature of the church in relation to its missionary calling? Even the venerable Professor Schlunk of Tübingen, one of the pillars of mission studies in the universities, wisely decided to shift the emphasis of his teaching from missiology to biblical studies where he could always count on a much larger audience than in missions. Besides, who would care for a career in missions or for missiology as an option in graduate theological studies in view of a world war that seemed to be imminent?

Princeton

However, before events took a fatal turn in that direction, an utterly unlikely thing happened. By means of an international student exchange that was still functioning, a temporary escape from Nazi Germany became possible. In the fall of 1937, I found myself as one of two German students who arrived at Princeton Theological Seminary, where we were greeted with suspicion rather than enthusiasm. We were even denounced by Albert Einstein and others as Nazi spies—and who would blame them?—yet we were also received with genuine affection by people like Professor Otto Piper and others who had escaped from Nazi persecution or had been able to remain in contact with the Con­fessing Church in Germany. But the one overwhelming experi­ence that year at Princeton was the encounter with the spirit and reality of a missionary world church that I had long ago lost sight of. Here it was, incarnate in fellow students from Africa, Asia, Latin America, but spelled out most fully in Dr. John A. Mackay’s class on “Ecumenics,” a subject known to us not even by name but now unfolded like a newly discovered world, as the “sci­ence of the world Christian community.” It was aptly supple­mented by Samuel M. Zwemer’s studies of Islam, both as a great religion in its own right and as a challenge to the Christian mis­sion. Church history remained the main emphasis in my Master of Theology studies and was to be taken up again after the war as my first subject in academic teaching, to be continued in India. Yet the providential ecumenical and missionary reorientation received at Princeton had come to stay, although for the following six years in the armed service and in prison camp it had to remain dormant until it was reactivated in another world, which emerged from the scattered remnants of a lost past.

Hamburg

Hamburg was to be the place of my first teaching assignment. Hamburg was also the seat of the central German Protestant mis­sion agency, under Professor Walter Freytag’s direction. Even before my academic career got under way, he called me out of
temporary parish and teaching duty as a theological assistant into the German Mission Council's service. German missions had been reduced to zero. If they were to be revived, a radical rethinking was required, according to Freytag's famous comparison of the postwar situation with the Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council in 1928: "Then missions had problems, but now they have become a problem themselves." Several theological lessons had to be learned, the first and foremost concerning the eschatological perspective of missions as the church's "taking part in the action of God, in fulfilling his plan for the coming of the kingdom by bringing about obedience of the faith in Jesus Christ our Lord among the nations," as Freytag put it in 1958. Issues such as this were hotly debated even in the early 1950s, in preparation for the World Missionary Conference of Willingen 1952, the first one ever on German soil.

India

The issues accompanied me on my way to India where I had been called shortly before Willingen. It was a call, not primarily to evangelistic missionary service but to a teaching job at Gurusala,

Our textbook assumed that church history had come to a standstill after 1910, and in India had apparently never taken place.

the divinity school of the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church—in Tranquebar, of all unlikely places, so far little more than a name to me but henceforth a place of initiation and apprenticeship in an utterly foreign world. Nothing else was intended, nothing else was expected. Later the job was expanded to include part-time teaching at Gurukul, Madras (commuting between Tranquebar and Madras to be done by motorcycle). Gurukul was the bachelor of divinity (B.D.) College of the Federation of Lutheran Churches in India, which eventually called me to its faculty as a full-time member.

As usual in such cases, the range of teaching had quickly outgrown the limits of my European academic qualifications. In addition to church history, not only dogmatics but even Hinduisms and Islam were entrusted to the newcomer, whether he liked it or not. German university authorities, which had granted leave of absence, were not impressed but confronted me with a painful choice: either immediate return to teaching duties in Germany, or renunciation of my qualification as a German Privatdozent. As India seemed to have more tasks in store for me, I settled for the latter. Colleagues, students, and Indian church authorities, especially the unforgettable Bishop Rajah B. Manikam, backed me up loyally.

In 1956 Walter Freytag passed through South India on what was to be his last major overseas journey. Once more he helped me to view the situation in the larger context of God's purpose in mission. To him the missionary task could not be conceived in terms of J. C. Hoekendijk's abstract "mission without church" but only in terms of "churches responding to the Word in given situations—not only where we are used to do so according to the ideas which we derive from western churches, but perhaps most intensely at points where a church's reactions are different from those of western churches." What would this mean for the training of the ministry?

When I began work at Tranquebar, the prescribed textbook for church history was a reprint of a British edition of 1911, leading students through the vicissitudes of European church history, with the Edinburgh conference of 1910 as the climax. Thereafter church history must have come to a standstill, and in India church history had apparently never taken place anyway. For the dogmatics course there was no Lutheran textbook at all. The Leipzig missionaries before World War I had produced a set of Tamil textbooks for all major theological disciplines. There was still a set in the library. But nobody had ever bothered about a revised edition. How, then, to overcome the alternative of monotonous spoon-feeding and irresponsible improvisation? How to apply the principle of the "responding church" to ministerial training—of a church responding to the Word in a given situation, in its own theological terms? It was an uphill task, but a rewarding one because it involved a process of trial and error, for students and teachers alike, with predictable defeats and, occasionally, unexpected successes. It would be too much to say that theological educators in India in those days had all been aroused by Charles Ranson's clarion call in his revolutionary book The Christian Minister in India: "To resolve to make the training of the ministry the pivot of Christian strategy may well be for churches and missions in post-war India 'the one great choice, which being honoured and held to, carries all the rest in the end and carries them high.'" But even in the seclusion of Tranquebar, the call and its urgency were felt, together with another challenge, which, so to say, had for some time become part and parcel of the Tranquebar genius loci: How can Christianity appeal to people of other faiths as long as its divisions betray the unity of the faith that Christians proclaim?

It was in Tranquebar in 1919 that a group of twenty-nine Indian ministers and two missionaries had gathered for a meeting, convened and chaired by Bishop Azariah of Dornakal. The resolution of the group became known as the Tranquebar Manifesto, described by Bishop Whitehead of Madras as "a small cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, which is destined rapidly to spread over India and descend in showers of blessing over the whole Christian Church." And in 1947 the hopes of Tranquebar 1919 did come true. The Church of South India (C.S.I.) had been inaugurated and had obviously come to stay. What were the Lutherans going to do about visible church unity, since they had not joined the united church? The newcomer from Germany addressed this question to his new superior, Johannes Sandegren, Lutheran bishop of Tranquebar, a man rooted more deeply in India than in his native Sweden. The answer was a characteristically cautious one: "We shall be open to either internal Lutheran church union or wider union, depending on the guidance which we hope to receive." Throughout the period 1948-59 C.S.I.-Lutheran theological conversations were held, in themselves a veritable testing-ground for the theological educators of both churches as well. Eventually "Agreed Statements" were produced on the main controversial doctrinal issues. Nowadays they are largely forgotten, in India and elsewhere. But they still make exciting reading. It will be left to later generations to analyze the reasons for the failure of the whole enterprise and for the success of the status quo prevailing to this day. It certainly was not due to lack of trying on the part of the negotiators in those days.

Heidelberg

Sooner than expected, my sojourn in India was terminated when
I received a call to a newly established chair for the history of religions and missiology in the theological faculty of Heidelberg University. The following thirty years of teaching, writing and, alas, sharing in administrative duties did occasion ally rouse nostalgia for India. However, even here the missionary quality of the pilgrimage persisted. Questions were bound to arise in the faculty from the outset. Neither history of religions nor missions was a required subject: Why, then, was there a new chair for them? Could not the existing ecumenical institute take care of those concerns? However, it had been the “ecumenist” himself, the late Professor Edmund Schlink, who had insisted on the new chair, and his support proved invaluable in developing a concept of mission studies that would be accepted by the whole faculty as a theological requirement of the first order.

T.E.F. Interlude

Among the new geographical horizons that opened up after India, the African continent loomed larger than others. First, there was a brief but delightful period of teaching in a theological course for young pastors from Lutheran churches all over Africa, sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation (L.W.F.) at Marangu, on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro. A much deeper involvement with Africa became possible when I was seconded for three years from my university in order to direct a special program for theological education in Africa on behalf of the Theological Education Fund (T.E.F.) of the World Council of Churches, primarily designed to “educate the educators” and thus in line with the T.E.F.’s much criticized principle of “building on strength.”

The story of the T.E.F. has often been told, and this is not the place to evaluate its achievements. When I joined the staff in its New York office in 1961, the fund had been in operation for three years, largely along the lines envisaged by the late Charles Ranson, its founding father, first director, and pacemaker even beyond his tenure of office. Yet it was by no means a one-man show. Rather, it functioned, as expressed in one report, within the ecumenical movement as a locus of concern where continuous thought could be given and helpful action taken toward strengthening the Christian ministry, even a “ministry with the poor,” which would require new ways and means of theological education in all six continents. Perhaps the time is yet to come when some of the seminal ideas of the T.E.F. will be carried to full fruition, as a late harvest of the labors of those who, like Charles Ranson, have counted it “one of the greatest privileges of their ministry to have had a small part in this service.”

Lessons Learned

My own connection with institutions of, and co-workers in, ministerial training in Africa, initiated under T.E.F. auspices, remained active long after I returned to my chair at Heidelberg. New and peculiar relationships were established when I was called to work as external examiner in departments of religious studies in the national universities of Uganda and Malawi, and later during several years of service on an L.W.F. committee dealing with Lutheran ministerial training in Africa and Madagascar.

Meanwhile the fascination of India had not subsided. In spite of visa problems, the exchange of scholars and students, especially with institutions like United Theological College, Bangalore, and Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, Madurai, has become livelier than ever. One-way traffic is increasingly being replaced by a genuine give-and-take. Partnership in mission has become partnership in learning, not least in missiology. The predominance of Western theology is, admittedly, dying hard, even harder than the self-assurance of Western churches. Bishop Lesslie Newbigin’s famous question, “Can the West be converted?” provocative as it is, applies here, too. A tentative answer might be, “Yes, provided we try hard enough in our respective situations.”

Who else in a theological faculty or college should initiate experiments in intercultural or intercontextual theology, if not the missiologist? Students are in that respect even more expectant than faculty colleagues. It is they, for instance, who raise questions about the colonial past of the missionary movement, questions that are more likely to be dealt with by secular historians than by church historians (the exception proves the rule: the only authentic and comprehensive new history of the old Tranquebar Mission has just been produced by a young Danish church historian). It is the students more than others who are disturbed by the habitual provincialism of Western churches and Western theology. It is they who insist on a holistic interpretation of the Christian world mission, including problems of the world economic order, development, and ecology. One could go on—not, of course, in order to make demands on the missiologist as a jack-of-all-trades, but in view of the irresistible change of paradigms that mission and missiology are undergoing. If mission, in the words of the late Karl Rahner, is to be the “decisive dimension of the total life of the church,” its intentions should be recast accordingly.

Continuing Opportunities

Is all this perhaps little more than day-dreaming? Rahner’s dictum implies that the academic achievement is not an end in itself, that the missiologist’s contribution stands and falls with what churches and Christians are going to do with it.

The missiologist’s contribution stands and falls with what churches and Christians are going to do with it. And that is the point where—paraphrasing a famous sentence in G. van der Leeuw’s Phenomenology of Religion—the analyzing and interpreting scholar retires, where his word gives way to the preached Word, his ministry to the ministry of the gospel. All the more will this retired missiologist be grateful to continue serving according to his ability, for example, in associations for mission studies: the oldest one founded in Germany in 1918 and continuing ever since; the first truly international one functioning since 1972, mainly due to the indefatigable efforts of Professor Olav G. Myklebust of Oslo. This retired missiologist will also devote as much time and energy as possible to promoting higher education, theological and otherwise, in areas where it is not sufficiently available yet.

After all, “mission is servanthood, and servanthood serves the structures of mission,” to quote John S. Pobee. So it seems that things have come round full circle, from humble beginnings to modest prospects. But what could be more in tune with the mission inaugurated and continued by One who had nowhere to lay his head?
The Legacy of Maurice Leenhardt

Marc R. Spindler

Biographical Notes

We French Protestants call it a "tribe": the Leenhardts and their relatives have a sense of belonging together and know that in unity is strength. They have exerted a distinct influence in French Protestantism and in society at large. A daughter of Maurice Leenhardt remembers that the family counted twenty-four Reformed ministers in the 1930s. The family is also active in university, politics, art, and industry. On occasion, they all meet at the ancestral castle at Fonfroide-le-Haut near Montpellier (Hérault, France), where sometime in the eighteenth century the first Leenhardts settled in France, coming from the "North" (Sweden?). Maurice Leenhardt was one of the most brilliant offsprings of the family in the twentieth century.

He was born in Montauban in 1878. His father was professor of natural sciences at the Protestant faculty of theology; a distinguished geologist, he was also interested in the biological theories of Darwin. His influence on his son was considerable. Maurice Leenhardt felt called to become a missionary, so he studied theology in Montauban and wrote his Bachelor's thesis in 1902 on "The Ethiopian Movement in Southern Africa from 1896 to 1899." It was a pioneering piece of scholarly research on what now is known as the African independent churches, and it is still widely quoted as a classic reference.

Maurice Leenhardt dedicated his thesis to Dr. F. Hermann Kruger, professor at the School of Missions of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, and a former missionary in Lesotho where he was involved in the efforts to set up a "self-governing" indigenous church. The concern for local initiative and leadership, which is so typical of Maurice Leenhardt, was certainly a legacy of Hermann Kruger.

In the meantime the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society was planning to open a new mission field in New Caledonia, and had sent a missionary for an exploratory trip. The region, mainly the Loyalty Islands, had been evangelized by the London Missionary Society and by indigenous evangelists visiting the various islands spontaneously. The large island of New Caledonia, called Grande Terre, was reached by at least two Melanesian evangelists, Mathaia and Haxen. But a European missionary was requested for further evangelistic progress and church planting. Maurice Leenhardt became that missionary. He arrived in November 1902, with his wife Jeanne Michel, the daughter of a famous art historian in Paris, to take over the task of the Melanesian evangelist Haxen, who died shortly after Leenhardt's arrival. Maurice Leenhardt and Philadelphe Delord—the missionary who prepared the way—immediately convened a conference of local evangelists. Two dozen came, all of them sent by Loyaltian churches.

Maurice Leenhardt established the base of his missionary activities at Houailou on the eastern coast, and named the station "Do Neva," meaning "the true country." He worked there and, from there, throughout the whole of Grande Terre, from 1902 to 1926.

A second career began for Leenhardt in Paris. But not exactly what he and his wife had expected. He could have been appointed director of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society or of the School of Missions. However, there were already two members of the Leenhardt family in these positions. It is not necessary to imagine an intrigue against "the liberal missionary," as some biographers do, in order to understand why Maurice Leenhardt had to wait his turn.

Leenhardt's new base became a popular parish in a working-class district of Paris. And in the evenings he worked on his material from New Caledonia: linguistic and ethnographic notes and documents. Articles were written, books prepared. He renewed his friendship with the leading French anthropologists whom he had met during his furlough in 1921: Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Marcel Mauss, Paul Rivet. He visited the newly established (1925) Institut d'Ethnologie that eventually published his first great anthropological studies in 1930. He brought fresh air into the scholarly world of French anthropologists: most of them were theorists working on secondhand material. No one had performed "field work" during twenty-four years, as Maurice Leenhardt had done. This field experience was the great strength of Leenhardt, but it was also his burden, because he remained committed to New Caledonia in a very special way; it contrasted with the so-called uncommitted or value-free attitude in cultural anthropology that was becoming the rule of the game.

Indeed, Leenhardt held fast to the missionary mandate he had received in the beginning. Even if he was no longer a missionary of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, he stayed within the "missionary fellowship," and what is more, he assumed an increasing responsibility in foreign missions with regard to the cultivation of missionary vocations, the training of missionaries and, above all, the furtherance of mission studies.

In 1927 Leenhardt launched a missiological bimonthly bulletin, Les Propos missionnaires, meant for private circulation among missionaries in the field, regardless of denomination, society, or nationality. In the long run the English-speaking subscribers got a regular supplement to the Propos, entitled The Link and prepared by the secretary of the Paris Missionary Fellowship, the Rev. M. Warren, from the North Africa Mission. Seventy-four issues were published until World War II disrupted everything; the last issue was dated April 1940. The débâcle in France took place in May.

Maurice Leenhardt was also the driving force behind the Youth Missionary Commission, a French resurgence of the Student Volunteer Movement with which Franz Leenhardt had been connected in 1900. He took an increasing share in the training of missionaries at the School of Missions of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society. In 1936-37 he taught a course entitled "Prudence missionnaire" that dealt with history's lessons for today's missions, explained principles and methods of missions, introduced applied anthropology, and emphasized missionary spirituality.

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In an excellent biography of Leenhardt, James Clifford, relying on family sources, insists that there were conflicts between his hero and the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society. Of course, the board of the society was not happy with the frequent interference of the Leenhardtts in the missionary policy in New Caledonia; clashes took place. However, on the whole, Leenhardt remained loyal to the Paris Mission, teaching a course at the School of Missions, writing a biography of Alfred Boegner, a former director of the society, and launching the missiological review *Le monde non chrétien* (old and new series) with the moral and material support of the society.

Meanwhile Leenhardt’s ethnographic reputation and anthropological skill were growing. Marcel Mauss associated him with his own teaching task at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes, from 1935 onward, working to such good purpose that his protégé was appointed full professor in his chair in 1942. In 1944 Leenhardt started a course in Austronesian languages (as we call them today), helped the Société des Océanistes in its reorganization, and eventually was elected its president. In 1947 he was sent to New Caledonia by the French government in order to establish the French Institute of Scientific Research in Oceania, and served as its founding director. In 1948 he was elected a member of the Academy of Colonial Sciences (later renamed Academy of Overseas Sciences). He spent his last years in Paris, as a respected patriarch of French cultural anthropology and of French Protestant missiology. He died in 1954.

In this article, I shall focus my attention on the missionary and missiological contributions of Maurice Leenhardt. His legacy in the fields of ethnography and applied anthropology has been exhaustively analyzed by James Clifford, who is a reliable guide for those needing more details in these fields. 5

The Missionary Legacy

Maurice Leenhardt was, strictly speaking, a pioneer missionary, namely, the first white missionary among many tribes of New Caledonia. He was not, however, the very first messenger of the Christian gospel in the region. The first messengers were Melanesian *natas* (a local word meaning “messengers,” later “pastors”). Leenhardt respected, valued, and stimulated local initiative and leadership. He insisted again and again that a missionary should not do things that indigenous church members and leaders could do. But he did not believe that this ability to do things was innate or easily given. This ability has to be educated, improved—and tested. The heart of missionary activity in his view was the pastoral school, or the theological college, where the leaders of the nascent church were trained for their ministry. Again, he warned against a timorous recruitment and selection for the ministry. The easy way is to dismiss the rebels and strong-minded individuals; actually, the church needs these kinds of persons in order to be strong. Leenhardt was indeed very critical about missionary and ecclesiastical bureaucracy that tends to eliminate nonconformists and to produce narrow-minded pen-pushers and spineless personages (in French: *moules*). He wanted a virile indigenous leadership, and this very aim required strong missionary leadership. This implied that disciplinary measures could be taken against the *natas*. But, said Leenhardt, “Now disturbed and upset, these *natas* will be later, when their new congregation has conquered their mind, faithful friends of the missionary who has warned, encouraged and finally loved them.” 6

Leenhardt displayed an intense curiosity for everything belonging and pertaining to his mission field. He observed every-

Leenhardt wanted a virile indigenous leadership, and this very aim required a strong missionary leadership.

thing, he noted everything, and he related things to one another intelligently and lovingly. Observation was for him a missionary method. He taught it to his students at the School of Missions: “To learn how to observe is half of wisdom.” 7 He was an extraordinary observer, perceiving the commonly unperceivable. For instance, he observed the making of shell money and noted the name of shell dust, *kororo*, residue of the process, a neolithic technique already obsolete. 7 The psychology of conversion was considerably enriched by his acute perception of the slightest symptoms of a new Christian life. 8 He also knew how to infect others with his curiosity: his own family, his students, and the *natas* who contributed to the harvest of data. This collective-gathering technique was particularly applied to the local languages. Leenhardt once told how his missionary activity was mixed with research:

At Do Neva I used to preach on the same topic in all Sunday worship services. The day began with the Sunday school. Then, in the morning service, I took my text from the lesson that was just dealt with. In the afternoon the pupils brought their writing slates with their own summary of the sermon . . . and sometimes it happened that an expression, an image, a word I did not know formulated exactly what I wanted to say. I was delighted, everybody understood at once, began to talk, and in the second worship service the teaching of the day was summed up with a richer and clearer vocabulary. There are few greater encouragements for a missionary than to learn from his catechumens and to receive something from them. 9

The Missiological Legacy

Maurice Leenhardt was not the man of a system; he was too much imbued with Melanesian, indeed, “Kanaka” ideas. (Kanaka is the name of a Melanesian people, that is sometimes applied to all Melanesians.) He was doing theology with a “kanakized mind.” 10 He accepted the validity of affective modes of knowledge, where life is the key concept. Two areas in Leenhardt’s experience illustrate this.

The first is the theology of adoption. Mission is a continuing process of adoption. 11 Leenhardt told it in the form of a short story:

A Kanaka from New Caledonia, staying in the South of France, was once caught sitting in an empty church, copying in a notebook the names of martyred pastors from a commemorative tablet of marble, a moving list of a tight succession.

—What are you doing here?
—I am copying the names of my ancestors.
And seeing that he was not understood, he explained:
—You, Christian Whites, were adopted first; by means of you, we were too, afterwards. 12

The second area is the ecclesiology of Leenhardt. 13 The “church” was not the primary concern of the young mission-
ary when he left France in 1902. But his Melanesian experience with the young, newborn church, sustained by the theological renewal of the 1920s, led to a real discovery of the “church” as the living body of Christ, planted by the missionary, but shooting out by itself in the force of the Word and the Holy Spirit of God. Leenhardt has briefly sketched a theory of church genetics, what I have called an “ecclesiogenetics,” perhaps in a positive sense a kind of ecclesiological Darwinism, which he did not work out. The important discovery was that the life of God should and could take a social shape in full authenticity.

Concluding Remarks

Space does not allow me to dwell on the anthropological legacy of Maurice Leenhardt. Suffice it to say, first, that he successfully introduced a way of understanding “Ethiopianism,” that is, African independent churches, as movements of social protest against oppression and racism. Second, he successfully contributed to the rehabilitation of “mythic thought” as a mode of knowledge in the cultural anthropological discussion of his time.

Notes

5. Ibid., pp. 124–224.
10. In French: “L’esprit tout enkanaké” (Roselene Dousset-Leenhardt, La tête aux antipodes, p. 23).

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Two hundred years ago—when what is sometimes referred to as the “William Carey era” of missions was in its infancy—the per-capita gross national products of the developed and the underdeveloped worlds were separated by a factor of less than two; by 1913, the ratio stood at 3 to 1, widening to 7 to 1 by 1970. The gap continues to grow at an accelerating rate.

Western missionaries today constitute part of a rich elite whose numbers, relative to the burgeoning populations of poor around the world, constitute a steadily diminishing proportion of the world’s total population. Furthermore, the economic gulf separating the rich from the poor is widening, despite sincere but essentially desultory efforts on the part of “developed” nations in the throes of one of the most bloody and pointless crusades against God.

The missionary expression of the Western churches is deeply affected by the press and pull of a social ethos that, if examined closely, is seen to be shaped, inspired, and driven by consummerism—the deep conviction that life consists in the abundance of possessions, especially more, better, up-to-date possessions. The culture that shapes us, the laws that govern us, the education coming . . . civilised.”?

In a more innocent age, it was possible for missionaries to believe that their relatively comfortable way of life was the inevitable outcome of a national life organized in a Christian way, and that, given enough time and sufficient conversions, the civilisation which is called Western is the slowly developed product of religion. . . . [and has] surged forward to its present high water by means of the internal pressure of its inner Christian elan, . . . an impulse which is but the expression of a Christian principle of life moving within.4

The civilisation which is called Western is the slowly developed product of religion. . . . [and has] surged forward to its present high water by means of the internal pressure of its inner Christian elan, . . . an impulse which is but the expression of a Christian principle of life moving within.
We no longer believe this to be so. The West has been de-mystified. We now know with terrifying certainty that, for most of our fellow human beings, there is no possible road to our way of life in the foreseeable future. The stark and brutal truth is that the natural resources of our planet are sufficient to support "civilised" life for only a tiny fraction of its human population. Accordingly, emissaries of the Western churches must be prepared as never before to test the truthfulness of their assertion that “Christ is the answer” in the context of personal material want.

North American Protestant mission agencies reported a total income of $1,356.3 million for 1985. Distributed among 764 agencies represented by 67,200 overseas personnel, the money is used to finance a wide range of mission strategies, which, it is scarcely mystified. We now know with terrifying certainty that, for most of our fellow human beings, there is no possible road to our way of life in the foreseeable future. The stark and brutal truth is that the natural resources of our planet are sufficient to support "civilised" life for only a tiny fraction of its human population. Accordingly, emissaries of the Western churches must be prepared as never before to test the truthfulness of their assertion that “Christ is the answer” in the context of personal material want.

In exchange for personal affluence, Western missionaries sacrifice apostolic effectiveness and credibility.
We seek a private house, a private means of transportation, a private garden, a private laundry, self-service stores, and do-it-yourself skills of every kind. An enormous technology seems to have set itself the task of making it unnecessary for one human being ever to ask anything of another in the course of going about his daily business. Even within the family Americans are unique in their feeling that each member should have a separate room, and even a separate telephone, television, and car, when economically possible. We seek more and more privacy, and feel more and more alienated and lonely when we get it. What accidental contacts we do have, furthermore, seem more intrusive, not only because they are unsought but because they are unconnected with any familiar pattern of interdependence.

This fierce love of personal independence is not left behind when Western missionaries travel abroad. The independence to which Westerners are accustomed is costly to maintain in other parts of the world. Only the person of considerable means can hope to afford it; conversely, the person wishing to live in an environment of segregated whites! The independence, segregation, and isolation that come with wealth translate into an unbridgeable social gulf between rich and poor. This social gulf makes genuine fraternal friendship so awkward as to be virtually impossible, a phenomenon well documented by Robert Coles in his study of the children of affluent Americans. A wealthy mother’s seven-word response to the troubled inquiry of her nine-year-old daughter somehow says everything the rich have ever been able to say concerning their relationships with the poor: “They are they and we are we.”

Independence is even more costly in nonmonetary terms, however. Not surprisingly, Western missionary communities have from the beginning been marked by a de facto racial segregation, since membership is based upon economic criteria that vestige of the past. They could not help but notice that the missionaries on the station were virtually isolated from their closest African neighbors. Any Africans venturing onto the station were menials or merchants, tending gardens, doing wash, delivering loads of wood. It was a world apart—a world of privileged, indulged missionary children enjoying the best education that money can buy in that country; a world of happy, fulfilled, industrious, supremely secure white missionaries, spending their lives in medical, educational, and developmental programs on behalf of—though not with—Africans; a world of white families, each with its glowing future; a world viewed by its closest neighbors with bitterness, envy, resentment, and sometimes naked hostility.

Since biblical faith is, above all, a relational faith, it is not only sad but sinful, when personal possessions and privileges prevent, distort, or destroy the relationships of Christ’s followers with the poor. But this appears to be an almost inevitable consequence of personal affluence.

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Nor have honest observers of Western missionary social behavior been blind to their apparent inability to establish close friendships with the poor. A friend is an intimate, someone with whom one generally and implicitly gravitate to those with whom they are not only temperamentally but socially and economically compatible. It is humanly almost impossible for a wealthy family to share a deeply fraternal relationship with a family whose material and economic resources are a pathetic fraction of their own; who cannot afford an education for their beloved children beyond minimal literacy, while the children of the wealthy family anticipate as a matter of course opportunity and money for education up to the very highest levels; whose house is a tiny one-room shack (made of straw or cardboard) with no amenities, while the wealthy family resides Western-style, in a bungalow complete with kitchen, bathroom, private bedrooms for each member of the family, carpeted floors, overstuffed furniture, closets and bureaus filled with clothes, and personal servants; who must rely solely upon leg power to get anywhere, while the wealthy family has access to car, jeep, power-boat, or airplane; for whom the concept of vacation does not even exist, while the wealthy family spends one month of each year traveling and sightseeing, or simply taking it easy in a resort far away from the grind of everyday work.

Between families of widely disparate means and standards of living, friendship is extremely unlikely. With whom does a missionary naturally choose to spend leisure time? With whom is a vacation comfortably shared? Who is likely to listen comprehendingly, sympathetically, understandingly to a couple as they pour out the peculiar frustrations, burdens, and perplexities of missionary parenting? With whom is a Western missionary likely to go shopping for family birthday or Christmas gifts? Who is able to commiserate with the missionary on the inadequacy of his or her support level? From whom will a missionary likely seek advice on personal financial matters—investment, banking, saving? In every case, it is very doubtful that the poor would have any part in these aspects of a missionary’s life. The social rapport

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can generally be met only by Western Christians. This is not to say that all contact with impoverished nonwhites is avoided. On the contrary, it is often the plight of such poor that has figured most prominently in Western missionary journeys to the ends of the earth. But such contacts have tended—particularly in places where there are large concentrations of missionaries among even larger numbers of poor—to accentuate the missionaries’ absolute independence of and segregation from the poor. This is isolation. There is something both ironic and tragic in the specter of a supremely relational gospel being proclaimed by an isolated community of segregated whites!

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International Bulletin of Missionary Research
required must obviously be reserved for social and economic peers. The presence of the poor in such situations would be an embarrassment to any missionary of even moderate sensitivity.

The staggeringly high relational price that Western missionaries must pay for their affluence could perhaps be overlooked, or at least endured, were it not for its insidious effects upon the communication process. For medium and message are both significantly affected by the relationship of the missionary to the convert or would-be convert. If the message of the cross consisted simply of a series of theologically correct propositions about God, humankind, and salvation, then the obligation to preach the gospel could be fulfilled by means of public announcements over the radio. But the Word must always be made flesh, and dwell among humanity. And the Way has always best been shown by those who can be accompanied by would-be pilgrims. Missionaries are above all Way-showers, whose lives must be imitable by their converts. Missionaries are not simply voice boxes, but pilgrims who invite others to join them on the narrow way.

It is clear from the Christian revelation that, while human beings are social, communicating, and thinking creatures, they are—at root—profoundly theological beings, created in the image of God. As a consequence, there is no facet of their life or thought that does not in some way reflect or affect their theology.

The social insulation, isolation, independence, and segregation from the poor that are seemingly inevitable relational consequences of missionary affluence become profoundly troubling when observed in the lives of those who represent the One who not only emptied himself in order to identify with the plight of fallen humanity—making himself “nothing, taking the very nature of a servant”—but who instructed all would-be followers to do likewise (Phil. 2:1–11).* All too apparent, likewise, are the ethical questions raised by the great gulf between the public preaching and the private practice of those whose mandate is to communicate the gospel in deed as well as in word. The New Testament calls this hypocrisy. And is not the practice of a strategy that can be emulated by only the very rich, and which by its very nature is not capable of relating the gospel to the poor, a theological as well as a sociological issue? What follows is no more than a hint of the wide range and complex nature of theological and ethical issues deriving from missionary affluence.

4. Personal affluence in the context of poverty raises legitimate doubts concerning a missionary’s willingness to obey and ability to teach the whole counsel of God regarding mammon.

A. Is Western Christian preoccupation with material things—with a continual desire for more—really no more than an incoherently acquired cultural trait? Enculturation in a society committed to and structured around the proposition that life consists in the abundance of possessions does have a significant bearing upon the theological integrity and credibility of Western missionaries. How can the economically secure and lavishly materially accoutered missionary teach the poor—with any degree of credibility—about simplicity, generosity, contentment, or the costly sacrifice entailed in all genuine discipleship? A missionary must teach these things, for they are in the very warp and woof of the Scriptures. And will not the obvious “thought for the morrow” taken by latter-day apostles to maintain and even increase personal comfort and security in this life make their teaching on the great joys of the life to come sound rather unconvincing to poverty-stricken disciples? Is it possible to maintain both credibility and an affluent lifestyle when teaching the poor what God says about the stewardship of possessions? Biblical answers to questions such as these suggest that emissaries of affluent Western churches dare not excuse their materialist preoccupations by blaming their culture. But there is a second question that must be asked.

B. Is the sin of greed less deadly for Western Christians than for the poor among whom they live? I believe the answer must be No. If—as I am often reminded by my missionary friends—poverty and wealth are relative concepts, making it possible for the same person to be poor in North America but rich in Africa, then surely it must be conceded that a life of pecuniary propriety in one society may be regarded as profligate in another.

It did not require a theologian to discern as long ago as 1956 that in the West all but one of the “seven deadly ‘sins,’” sloth, was transformed into a positive virtue. Greed, avarice, envy, glutony, luxury, and pride were the driving force of the new economy.”* Of vital concern to Western missionaries must be the question of how and to what degree they unconsciously reflect this inversion of biblical values. Can it be that even these pious and esteemed representatives of the Western churches have been tainted by that ethical decay which lies at the heart of what is called “consumerism”? The rapidity with which even marginally technological “breakthroughs” are metamorphosed into “necessities” in Western mission may provide a clue to the answer to this question.

If “greed” be defined as the desire for more than enough in a social context in which some have less than enough, then most who journey from North American shores must accept the fact that most of the world considers them. Among the most awkward challenges faced by Western missionaries abroad is the necessity of explaining to the truly needy why Westerners not only need to be staggeringly wealthy by the standards of all but a few, but will doubtless need even more next year. In the eyes of the poor even the ordinary missionary must seem to incarnate many of those qualities, which, by Paul’s standards, disqualified a person from office in a church: a lover of money (1 Tim. 3:3), one who has not fled from but, rather, embraced great gain (1 Tim. 6:5–11). According to Paul, the children of darkness are characterized by self-indulgence of every kind, and by “a continual lust for more” (Eph. 4:19). “But among you,” Paul continues, “there must not be even a hint [italics added] of . . . greed. . . . For of this you can be sure: No . . . such person . . . has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph. 5:3–5). These are sobering words to those of us who—despite being surrounded by the truly needy—have come to expect as our due steady improvement in our already high standard of living, even if it must be at the expense of those who barely subsist.

Sadly, a strong case can be made in support of the proposition that Western missionaries—true sons and daughters of their churches back home—show no great willingness to lose all things for the sake of Jesus Christ. Far from being, in Paul’s words, “rubbish” (Phil. 3:7–8), their material symbols of affluence have

Missionaries are not simply voice boxes, but pilgrims who invite others to join them on the narrow way.

*Biblical quotations in this article are from the New International Version.
become absolutely essential for the continuation of mission from the West. Christ's teaching on the abundance of possessions cannot be taught—because it will not be practiced—by most Western Christians.

5. The money- and power-based strategies and statuses generated by the institutional and personal affluence of Western missionaries contradict principles that are at the very heart of Christian mission as prescribed in the New Testament. The incarnation and the cross of our Savior are models for apostolic life and ministry. For those of us who insist on clinging to our prerogatives as privileged Westerners, the missiological implications of the incarnation are clear. One of the conclusions emerging from the 1978 Willowbank Consultation on the Gospel and Culture was, not surprisingly, that the incarnation is a model for Christian witness. Applied to Christian missionary endeavor this meant, the authors of the Report went on to explain, a threefold renunciation: of status, of independence, and of immunity.17

Those Western missions popularly regarded as most progressive typically do their best to demonstrate that they have reversed this pattern: the missionary vocation becomes a distinguished career, longevity of tenure ensuring a pleasant retirement in Florida, and perhaps even the status of "statesman"; a rich variety of home-based support infrastructures reduce local dependence to a minimum; financial, logistical, and medical contingencies are anticipated and dealt with in such a way as to guarantee to missionaries immunity from the dire straits of those among whom they work. We save ourselves, we assure ourselves, so that we can save others.

The affluence-based mission of the Western church—in contrast to the incarnation-based mission of its Lord—most naturally serves as an ecclesiastical springboard for moving up, not down; its independently secure missionaries find lording both more natural and more immediately effective than serving, although many have convinced themselves that domination is service. The great marvel of living in the technological age is that one's mission can speed up, rather than—as in the case of Christ—slow down and finally come to a complete halt on the cross. We have discovered—to our great relief—that prolonging one's abundant life is not only personally gratifying; it is a demonstrably superior way of marketing the good news than is, say, dying. And thus the gospel is reduced to the peddling of ideas about the One who was rich but for our sakes became poor, and who personally demonstrated what has proved to be true ever since: spiritual vitality comes to full potency only through weakness (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

The affluent church—by abandoning the incarnation as a model for its own life and mission—has demonstrated its fundamental spiritual impotence. For as theologian Trevor Verryn reminds us, "Only the truly strong are able to lay aside their power in an act of self-emptying and assume a position of powerlessness." The strategy of the cross that has ever marked the true servant of God is nowhere more accurately or inadvertently summed up than in the words of the ridicule of the religiously powerful who, satisfied that they had saved themselves no end of trouble by at last disposing of Jesus, chuckled among themselves, "He saved others, but he can't save himself!" Alas for religious teachers of that day and this! In trying to save themselves, they cannot save others.

Added to the self-saving affluence of Western missions, which leaves so little room for that weakness in which God delights, one final deeply theological problem needs to be touched upon.

6. Both the motives and the message of affluent missionaries are suspect, and biblical teaching on wealth and poverty, the rich and the poor, must necessarily be truncated when conveyed via an affluent channel. Missionaries cannot challenge converts to a way of life that they themselves are unwilling to live. This is a centuries-old problem that recurs wherever missionaries from the West have gone to do their work among materially poorer societies.

Can the secure and infinitely better-off missionaries teach those who barely subsist about sacrifice, about simplicity, about costly discipleship? Can they demonstrate their personal faith in the truth that godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Tim. 6:6-19)? How can the Western missionary teach poor Christians not to become engrossed in the things of this world, because they are all passing away—when the missionary's own lifestyle suggests a preoccupation with possessions (1 Cor. 7:30-31)? Is it possible for affluent missionaries to claim honestly, in the midst of their plenty, that they consider everything as rubbish compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus their Lord, for whose sake they have lost all things (Phil. 3:8)? Is it possible that missionaries from the West so reflect the values of the West that such things can only be "taught," not demonstrated? Honest answers to questions such as these indicate that both the credibility and the integrity of missionary endeavors from the wealthy nations are in jeopardy. In summary, Western missionary affluence is the human culture in which profoundly theological relational and ethical problems most naturally thrive: preoccupation with possessions; an exclusive dependence upon power-based statuses and strategies; and ethical double standards.

Western Christians rightly regard the poverty of fellow human beings as a gigantic problem about which we seem able to do very little; we have proved less willing to view our personal affluence as a spiritual—hence even greater—problem. Global poverty is an acute material problem, no doubt; but Western affluence is a profoundly spiritual one. Is it not at least as difficult for us members of the Western church to overcome our affluence as it is for our poverty-stricken brothers and sisters in the rest of the world to survive their poverty? Unless we come to see our Western world through the eyes of Jesus, we shall continue to excuse the personal and collective covetousness and greed that have made us "great," and above the locked door to the heart of the richest church the world has ever seen will be written—in splendid gilt lettering—the word ICHABOD. And the Savior will remain on the outside (Rev. 3:17-20).

What can be done? Is it really true, as Ivan Illich insisted, in 1970, that "There is no exit from a way of life built on $5000-plus per year..."?20 The Western missionary experience of the 1980s seems to support his pessimism; but are change, repentance, conversion—the stock-in-trade of missionary preaching—possible only for nonmissionaries?

The possibility of the Christian mission being carried out without vast financial resources or an elite corps of highly paid professional Western missionaries is not merely a theoretical possibility. For the major part of the church's existence it has been a necessity, and as the twentieth century draws to a close, it is increasingly clear that most missionary endeavor has been, is being, and must continue to be undertaken by missionaries from the poorer churches.21 One of the most difficult lessons the West-
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Good Words from Good Friends.
ern church will one day be compelled to learn is, according to theologian David Bosch, "how to become again what originally was and was always supposed to be: the church without privileges, the church of the catacombs rather than of the halls of fame and power and wealth.

When it comes to transforming international or national political, social, economic, or religious institutions, it is true that the efforts of one person must seem comically inadequate. We yearn for "structural change," which will make personal change easier. In the colorful words of a former editor of the Edinburgh Review, we feel "like flies on the chariot wheel; perched upon a question of which we can neither see the diameter, nor control the motion, nor influence the moving force." But fatalism has never been a strong forte of Western missionaries. Like the apostle Paul (Rom. 7:14-25), they well know that the line between good and evil cannot be drawn between opposing political or economic ideologies, or along racial, social, national, or even religious lines: for both good and evil dwell within the heart of every person born. They know, furthermore, that the goal of the Christian life is not the creation and maintenance of a personal utopia in this life. To manifest the fruit of the Spirit in a less-than-perfect environment is not only a more worthy, but a more realistic, goal in a creation groaning under the tyranny of the forces of darkness.

In grappling with questions arising from personal affluence, the Christian missionary must begin with a clear understanding of the profoundly theological dimensions of the issue. Ideas have consequences. The One who searches and knows the secrets of the human heart reminds us of what we already instinctively know: as people thinketh in their hearts, so are they. However dimly understood or inadequately applied, God's revelation to humankind by means of words and through the Living Word must be the basis of all Christian missionary belief and action. The Bible is our map. Jesus is our best example of how to follow that map.

Only with such a theological orientation can practical problems and objections be dealt with Christianly rather than just pragmatically, and, where need be, changes can be made, new directions can be taken, and relationships between rich Christians and mammon can be transformed. The conscience, someone once noted, is like a sundial. The person who comes to it in the night with only a flashlight will discover that it will obligingly tell any time one might wish; but during the day, with the sun shining upon it, it must tell the truth. The parallel between the Christian conscience and the Word of God is clear.

Among the richly varied theological motifs running through the pages of the New Testament, three are of such broad significance as to touch upon every other facet of Christian faith and practice: the incarnation, the cross, and weakness as power.

For Western Christian missions, grappling with economic power at the theological level will mean subjecting all personal, family, ecclesiastical, and strategic plans, policies, practices, and considerations to these three questions: (1) Does it reflect the incarnation, or is it essentially self-serving? (2) Is the cross both the message and the method, or is self-preservation the bottom line? (3) Are people more impressed by its stability and strength or by its weakness? The answers to these questions will provide some intuition of the future of Western missions as a vitally Christian spiritual force.

Notes

5. This is the figure given by the editors of the 13th edition of the Mission Handbook: North American Missions Overseas (Monrovia: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1986), p. 611.
6. Ibid., p. 11.
9. De Tocqueville was a French nobleman who is today best known for his book Democracy in America, containing descriptions and observations made in the course of less than one year of travel in the United States in 1831-32. The book has remained in print ever since, and continues to be cited as an accurate and still useful commentary on the American way of life. Since that time, countless others have commented on the American love of independence. See, for example, Jules Henry, Culture against Man (New York: Random House, 1963), and Philip Slater, The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).
12. This is why the U.S. Department of Labor publishes the quarterly bulletin U.S. Department of State Indexes of Living Costs Abroad, Quarters Allowances, and Hardship Differentials. As the July 1987 edition of this publication explains, "the indexes should not be used to compare living costs of Americans in the United States with the living costs of foreign nationals living in their own country, since the indexes reflect only the expenditure pattern and living costs of Americans." (p. 1). A number of U.S.-based mission agencies use the data in this publication as a helpful point of reference when undertaking similar calculations on behalf of their own missionaries.
14. November 1987, Nairobi, Peters and Nelson to Bonk. The observations of youthful visitors are often superficial, it is true. But sadly, this was not the case in this instance. The view that this large enclave of Western missionaries is profoundly isolated was subsequently corroborated by several who's judgment cannot be so lightly dismissed. Two of these are Kenyans—the one an active churchman and chairman of the Religious Studies Department of a large university in Nairobi; the other a missionary-educated official within the Kenyan Department of Education. The third is a well-known American professor of missions, who is a regular visiting lecturer at a nearby African Bible School.


21. According to David B. Barrett’s “Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1988,” in International Bulletin of Missionary Research, 12, no. 1 (January 1988): 16–17, there are now an estimated 262,000 foreign missionaries and 3,800 foreign-mission sending agencies. In addition, there are 3,807,600 national church workers. Most of these are non-Western and, by Western standards, poor.


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Book Reviews

Many Mansions: A Christian’s Encounter with Other Faiths.


This is a personal testimony of one man’s encounter with the major world religions and current ideologies such as Marxism. Cox begins with a plea for the centrality of personal testimony in the meeting between persons, and for commitment to Jesus in affording the best guide to the “rules” of dialogue. In a charming and stimulating account he we see how, for example, he has discovered “the feminine quality of God” (p. 63) through Vaishnavite Hinduism, how Buddhist meditation helped him realize the role of Jesus, and how liberation theology properly makes it “difficult to justify any form of interreligious dialogue in which our are systematically excluded” (p. 179). He ends with a vision of wider ecumenism in which “re­ligions” concern themselves mutually in stewardship of our fragile planet. Tellingly, Jesus is never mentioned in the final chapter and many questions are untouched or unresolved.

Cox does not reflect on the question of truth claims despite raising the issue on numerous occasions. Neither do we have any adequate exploration of Christology and the Trinity, although in Cox’s religionless Christianity this is not altogether surprising. From Cox’s account it is difficult to see what constitutes either the distinctiveness or the uniqueness of Christianity, and when he says that Hinduism could learn from Christianity about the value of “change” (pp. 67f.), the question arises whether he offers a reductionist and sometimes superficial picture of the world religions. His chapter on Christian-Jewish relations fails to dialogue seriously with exegetical opinions contrary to his own, and important authors mentioned in the book are often missing from the bibliography (e.g., Carl Raschke and Tissa Balasuriya). There is a certain hurried­ness and lack of rigor to this otherwise moving autobiographical account.

—Gavin D’Costa

Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements.


When I first came to England I approached Oxford University Press with a plan for an “Oxford Dictionary of Pentecostalism.” I pointed out to the publishers that such an enterprise would be financially highly vialble, fill a long-felt gap, and had to be edited by an international team of scholars. I received a rather rude letter telling me that the OUP could not possibly provide dictionaries for every conceivable sect!
The publication of the Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements by Zondervan shows how far we have traveled in the last ten or fifteen years, although this dictionary does not cover international Pentecostalism. It focuses primarily on North America and Europe. There are perfectly good reasons for such a decision, not least the enormous difficulty of producing an international dictionary. It is nevertheless a pity, because in their statistical sections the editors claim the truly amazing statistics of the worldwide movement while the historical and theological sections contain very little material from outside the Western world. Had the traditions of this majority within Pentecostalism been included, a picture of a genuine third-world movement with all its theological contradictions, social pains, and political compromises would have emerged.

Walter J. Hollenweger is Professor of Mission at the University of Birmingham, England. He was for a time executive secretary with the World Council of Churches and has published The Pentecostals (1972, 1988).

1990–91
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However, I am thankful for this important beginning. Within the set limits the dictionary covers a wide range of authors (including some notable Catholic scholars) and theological interpretations, some more traditional, others daring and exciting and perhaps disturbing to some readers.

A careful reading shows that Pentecostalism is entering cautiously but definitely into a critical and ecumenical phase. To demonstrate this, one might turn to the following random examples: an article on Fundamentalism by the Pentecostal pioneer historian H. V. Synan (the breaks of Pentecostalism with Fundamentalism turned out to be a blessing, p. 327); a farewell article to the old theory of verbal inspiration and an attempt at formulating a Pentecostal hermeneutics by the Church of God scholar F. L. Arrington (pp. 376ff.); an analysis of glossolalia by the director of the David Du Plessis Center at Fuller Theological Seminary, R. P. Spittler (glossolalia is a human phenomenon; the doctrine of tongues as initial evidence for the baptism of the Spirit can only wrongly be described as the essence of Pentecostalism, p. 340); a discussion of the Virgin Birth by the Catholic authorress J. M. Ford (the New Testament makes no explicit connection between the divinity of Jesus and his virginal conception, p. 584); a defense of Oneness Pentecostalism by the Oneness theologian D. A. Reed (pp. 644ff.); a well-informed article on black theology (pp. 84ff.), and a remarkable critique of the “Gospel of Prosperity” (p. 720), both of these latter entries by the black Pentecostal theologian L. Lovett.

It seems obvious that a new breed of Pentecostal and Charismatic scholars is no longer prepared to accept the statements of the past uncritically, although one would have wished a more discerning approach in places to the new television and healing evangelists (e.g., John Wimber, Jimmy Swaggart, Pat Robertson). Surely the future of Pentecostalism does not lie with these flamboyant, unashamedly wealthy and therefore often politically reactionary exponents of Pentecostal spirituality but, rather, with the sound and steadily growing local churches.

The beautifully printed dictionary with its 300 well-chosen photographs will certainly stimulate the dialogue between the various brands of Pentecostalism and facilitate a better understanding in the wider ecumenical movement. No library can afford to be without this book, and the reasonable price makes it not only desirable but also affordable for the ordinary pastor and religious journalist.

—Walter J. Hollenweger
Seven Hundred Plans to Evangelize the World: The Rise of a Global Evangelization Movement.


This is a truly incredible book. There are two voices here. There is the plans-loving voice and there is the mission-sensitive voice. Although the very spirit and orientation of the book rests on the assumption there need be no contradiction between the two voices, they nevertheless argue all the time.

The book's foreword rejoices at the many plans that take A.D. 2000 as their target year. “This is an overwhelmingly significant goal” (p. ii). Then the next chapter reminds us that Jesus rejected three tempting plans, and that Christians must ask of the plans whether they are “Christ’s or Satan’s” (p. 4).

One voice tells us that the Great Commission emphasizes “seven distinct mandates: Receive! Go! Witness! Proclaim! Disciple! Baptize! Train!” (p. 4). The other voice tells us that “the Father’s will was a plan for Jesus to accomplish the world’s salvation through pain and agony” (p. 3).

The plans-loving voice makes the incredible observation that the first fifty-nine generations after Jesus, before 1800, “got very little serious attention from the church” because “those generations received only an average of 2-6 plans per generation. . . . This means that on the average, throughout this entire period, an entire generation was allowed by Christ’s followers to live, die and fall into oblivion, with only a couple of global evangelization plans being proposed” (p. 8). The other voice recognizes that of the 788 identifiable global evangelization plans “401 have failed” and “133 current plans are in danger of collapse.” Some have fizzled out and been “disclaimed within a few days of their being announced” (p. 46).

There are times when the two voices do agree. When this happens, the result is even more incredible. Here is a sample. The mission-sensitive voice worries about the fact that most of the megaplans are Western plans. “It would be far more preferable if third world and communist block churches (who all together form 64% of the world’s Christians. . . .) took over

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Raymond Fung is Secretary for Evangelism, Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland.
a dominant lead in this respect.” The plans—loving voice then describes how. “The Third World and Communist-block churches . . . could do this by supplying the necessary enthusiasm and dynamic; they could supply the spirituality, the toughness, the capacity to endure sacrifice and suffering, the vast reserves of manpower and womanpower required, the massive logistics, and so on” (p. 47).

No wonder that the three major worldwide evangelization movements—the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (Vatican), the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (WCC), and Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization—“never showed any enthusiasm” for these plans, as the book regretfully acknowledges (p. 43). But not so much for the simple explanation suggested by the book—lagging commitment, strategic roadblocks, problems with mission agencies, religious and political oppositions, and rising cost. The reason goes deeper. It has to do with the very idea of Christian humans, not to mention Western Christian humans, running megaplans in the name of world evangelism.

-Raymond Fung

New Frontiers in Mission.


This volume presents the papers and report of a consultation on new frontiers in mission. It was one of the three consultations that comprised Wheaton '83, a conference on “The Nature and Mission of the Church” convened by the World Evangelical Fellowship.

Dealing specifically with the new frontiers of mission, such topics as missionaries from Younger Churches, unreached peoples, and contextualization of both the message and the mission structures are discussed.

Some very strong and exciting directions are indicated, such as the call for new structures as outlined by David Cho or the case studies provided of integration of nationals and overseas missionaries in Indonesia by Petrus Octavianus. Ralph Winter's classification of unreached peoples is helpful to understand the true nature of the task.

There is much that is good in the book, like the criticisms of Western-based mission organizations that hire nationals away from the two-thirds-world churches by paying them more than they could ever earn in the local context. Clear challenges are presented regarding where effort must be expanded to solve problems that exist.

The papers represent only a beginning. The problems are illuminated but solutions are complex and will take considerable understanding to solve. Some can be solved only by a radical restructuring of contemporary mission societies. Because of the nature of the task and the independence of the structures concerned, it is not surprising that the consultation was not able to make more concrete plans.

Several things could have made the book more useful. The fourteen contributors should have been identified by more than their names. While some may be well known, listing the country and field of service of each of them would aid the reader in understanding the context from which they are speaking. Also, interested readers could have the possibility to contact them and pursue the subject. The book also suffers from the lack of an index, so that future reference to it will be limited.

-James J. Stamoolis

James J. Stamoolis was a missionary in South Africa and for the last eight years served as theological secretary for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students.

International Bulletin of Missionary Research
Passport to Servanthood: The Life and Missionary Influence of T. B. Maston.


Earl Martin, in his eloquent but precise way, has done the misiological world a great service. He has registered in print the largely unrecognized contributions of the late T. B. Maston to the missionary enterprise. Maston, for forty years (1922-62) professor of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, stamped his influence on hundreds of Southern Baptist home and foreign missionaries.

Maston, who died in May 1988, has received accolades for his ministry as a courageous, prophetic ethicist (before it was popular or safe to be one among Southern Baptists) and as a prolific, incisive writer. His books on moral questions and how to deal with suffering are classics. His Ph.D. disciples in the more prophetic and missionary ministries of Southern Baptists give testimony to his effectiveness as a classroom teacher.

Maston received his academic training at Carson-Newman University, Southwestern Seminary, and rounded it off with a Ph.D. from Yale Divinity School. However, Martin has showcased what T. B. Maston would consider most important—his role in the foreign missions enterprise.

The Mastons always felt that God had called them to be foreign missionaries. He had—but led them to work out their unique missionary ministry along unconventional paths of service. Maston has been the quiet, gentle counselor behind the exciting missionary careers of his disciples. The Mastons’ lifelong care of a son afflicted with spastic paralysis added a dimension of depth to their ministry. At home, and on many mission fields where he was invited to lecture, Maston demonstrated an uncanny missionary mentality and his “servant-concept” of ministry.

To readers outside Southern Baptist circles the book will “smack of sentimentality” and be a bit too “folksy and provincial.” This is partly the result of Martin’s personal style, but for those who knew Maston, it is the only genuine way to catch the “folksy manner” of Maston himself.

Earl Martin is director of the Institute of World Mission, Evangelism, and Church Growth at the International Baptist Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland. Before that he served for over thirty years as a missionary teacher in Africa, and professor of missions and world religions at Southwestern Baptist Seminary.

The multitude of Christian workers who knew and respected Maston will find this book to be an inspiring assessment of his missionary ministry. Others concerned about volunteer missions and missions education will want to use it to help people discover the joy and challenge of Christian missions.

—Justice C. Anderson

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An Asian Theology of Liberation.


An Asian theology of liberation is emerging, and there is no general agreement on the methodology. The most influential Asian theologian of liberation, by far, is Aloysius Pieris, S.J., founder and director of Tulana (Dialogue Centre) in Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, and editor of its journal Dialogue. A specialist in Buddhist studies, Pieris earned the first doctorate in that field ever awarded a non-Buddhist by the University of Sri Lanka.

A basic disagreement of methodology among Asian theologians of liberation was exposed at the Asian conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians held in Wennappuwa, Sri Lanka, in 1979. The paper presented by Pieris at that conference was seminar and provides the substance of the book under review. At that conference tensions were felt between professional Asian theologians concerned about dialogue with the classic religions of Asia and practical theologians involved with grassroots action groups.

The Sri Lanka delegation, led by Father Pieris, said that an Asian theology of liberation could not avoid an encounter with the great religions indigenous to Asia. The condition of being a tiny minority in Asia (only 3 percent), they added, should move Asian Christians to create a theology of liberation that will “radically differ” from South American and even African theologies. But the Filipino delegation, led by Carlos Abesamis, S.J., sharply replied with an emphasis on sociopolitical liberation along Latin American lines. Chapter 7 of this book should be read against the backdrop of this intense debate. In the mind of this reviewer, such debates are a sign of a new and advanced stage in Asian theological thinking. It is evidence of growing maturity when theologians differ, acknowledge their differences, and stand their own ground in an open forum.

It was Pieris’s paper that made all this possible. While Father Abesamis contends that the main characteristic of a truly Asian theology must be social analysis (along Marxist lines) and radical transformation of political structures, Father Pieris is not content merely to apply Latin American liberation theology uncritically to the Asian scene as many others seem ready to do. "A Liberation Theopraxis in Asia," he writes, "which uses only the Marxist tools of social analysis will remain un-Asian and ineffective" until it integrates "the psychological tools of introspection" that Eastern sages have discovered (pp. 80f.).

Any theology that is contextually Asian, Pieris goes on to say, must grapple with two interpenetrating realities: Asia’s poverty, which identifies it with the third world, and its religiosity, which defines its specific character as Asian (p. 69). The mention of “psychological tools” is an obvious reference to Buddhism—Asia’s most widespread religion. He is critical of both Western and Latin American theology when he draws a disturbing contrast between “freedom from poverty,” which is the goal of our social struggle, and “the freedom that comes from poverty” (p. 80). The Buddhist ideal of voluntary poverty, or nonacquisitiveness, challenges contemporary Christianity, which has failed to question seriously the materialism and consumerism of its own societies. Freedom from acquisitiveness must become the "condition for liberation" within ourselves, and "interior liberation" is the basis of any

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Douglas J. Elwood is Professor of Theology at the Divinity School of Silliman University, Dumaguete City, Philippines, where he has served as a career missionary under the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
authentic approach to social liberation. According to the Eastern philosophy of detachment, “enforced poverty would be the redemptive antidote to acquisitiveness—the sin that generates enforced poverty” (p. 61). An authentic Asian theology must integrate voluntary poverty and solidarity with the poor in order to minimize the problem of enforced poverty.

What is not clear is how a Buddhist doctrine of voluntary poverty is going to lift the masses from their economic poverty given the high population growth rate of most Asian countries. Also, Pieris appears to share with Latin American liberation theologians a number of assumptions that may not be relevant to the wider Asian context, such as the assumption that wealth generates poverty and that praxis precedes theory. But these considerations ought not to detract from the powerful challenge this book offers to both Western and other third-worldologies.

—Douglas J. Elwood

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“The Implications of Recent Ecumenical Thought for the Christian-Hindu Relationship.”

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