

# Witness

Journal of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education

**Eucharist:  
The Embrace of Liturgy and Mission**  
*Catherine E. Williams*

1

**Evangelism and Social Concern:  
How Do We Maintain a Healthy Balance?**  
*Rick Richardson*

19

**Evangelism and Social Concern Among the Maasai:  
The Mission of Vincent Donovan Thirty-Five Years Later**  
*John P. Bowen*

35

**The Place of the Gospel Narrative in the Aftermath of Trauma**  
*Samantha Schneider*

45

**Toward a Transformational Education:  
A Past-to-Future Look at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies**  
*Al Tizon*

57

**Book Talk - With Paul Chilcote and Lacey Warner**  
*Daniel E. Lebo*

81

volume 24

2010

**Al Tizon**, *Editor*

**Courtney B. Davis Olds**, *Managing Editor*

**F. Douglas Poe**, *Book Review Editor*

*Witness* is the peer-reviewed journal of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education (AETE), which was founded in 1973 to resource, encourage, and support professors who teach evangelism in seminaries, theological schools, and universities. *Witness* provides a forum to exchange ideas, sharpen or challenge perspectives, and test pedagogies. Although all of the articles that appear in *Witness* have been carefully reviewed, they do not necessarily reflect the views of AETE.

*Witness* (ISSN 0894-9034) is published annually by AETE and is included with membership. Individual, non-member subscriptions can be purchased at \$15 for one year (one issue) or \$50 for four years (four issues). Back issues are also available.

For more information about AETE membership, visit [www.aeteonline.org](http://www.aeteonline.org). For subscription information or general inquiries regarding *Witness*, please write to the managing editor at [AETEmanagingeditor@gmail.com](mailto:AETEmanagingeditor@gmail.com).

**Submission of Articles:** *Witness* welcomes original articles of high academic standards that deal with the theology, practice and teaching of evangelism. Contributors should follow the Chicago Manual of Style format with endnotes. All articles should be in MSWord, double-spaced, no more than 18 pages in length and sent electronically to Al Tizon at [atizon@eastern.edu](mailto:atizon@eastern.edu). Contributors should also include a short bio. Because *Witness* is an annual journal, please be patient with the editor's response.

Executive Members of Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education are:

**John P. Bowen**, *President*

**Paul W. Chilcote**, *Vice President*

**Matthew Elofson**, *Secretary*

**John P. Bowen**, *(interim) Treasurer*

**Ronald W. Johnson**, *Past President*

*Editor's  
Take*

**Evangelism in Places of Suffering**

*Al Tizon*      **iii**

*Articles*

**Eucharist: The Embrace of Liturgy and Mission**

*Catherine E. Williams*      **1**

**Evangelism and Social Concern: How Do We Maintain a Healthy Balance?**

*Rick Richardson*      **19**

**Evangelism and Social Concern Among the Maasai: The Mission of Vincent Donovan Thirty-Five Years Later**

*John P. Bowen*      **35**

**The Place of the Gospel Narrative in the Aftermath of Trauma**

*Samantha Schneider*      **45**

**Toward a Transformational Education: A Past-to-Future Look at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies**

*Al Tizon*      **57**

**Book Talk - With Paul Chilcote and Lacey Warner**

*Daniel E. Lebo*      **81**

*Book  
Reviews*

**Search and Rescue**, Neil Cole

*Steve Munz*      **93**

**GloboChrist**, Carl Raschke

*Matt Elofsen*      **96**

**Springs of Living Water**, David S. Young

*Robert G. Hughes*      **100**

**Comeback Churches**, Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson

*Michael Gehring*      **102**

**Mystic Way of Evangelism**, Elaine Heath

*Paul Chilcote*      **104**

**The God of Intimacy and Action**, Tony Campolo and Mary Darling

**107**

*Paul Chilcote*

**The Next Evangelicalism**, Soong-Chan Rah

*Montague Williams*      **110**



## Editor's Take

# Evangelism in Places of Suffering

How does the church's call to bear witness to the gospel express itself in places of suffering? This question served as the guiding theme for members of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education in October of 2008. And to place ourselves in a context conducive to such a topic, we met in New Orleans, where one of the most devastating disasters in United States history took place just three years prior.

Monuments of Hurricane Katrina's destruction were still on display—impassable roads, half-destroyed buildings, whole sections of once thriving communities now abandoned. Some areas were worse than others. We took the time to walk through several neighborhoods in the Lower Ninth Ward and were amazed at what we saw, even three and a half years after Katrina. Somebody explained to us that the big orange Xs on the doors of many of the un-restored homes marked places where casualties were found.

One image that I haven't been able to shake was the inside of a sanctuary where it seemed like a bomb had gone off, mangling all the church furniture and hurling it viscosly in all directions. I looked up the sanctuary's high ceiling and saw chairs hooked onto the crystal light fixtures. We were told that these chairs were

deposited there when the water receded. At one point then, this entire, magnificent cathedral was completely underwater. This house of God—a place where people came to worship, to learn the ways and purposes of God, to seek refuge from the storms of life—was submerged in destructive waters. I’m not sure why this scene left such a deep impression on me. Perhaps it symbolized the feeling that I imagined many people had during that time—that God had abandoned them.

So the question we asked about the gospel in places of suffering is a good one. How does one bear witness to the good news among traumatized, hurting people? The articles in this issue address this and other related themes from different angles. While some of the articles represent papers presented at the meeting, others do not.

The lead article, written by Catherine Williams, sets the stage by exploring the connection between the church’s mission and the Eucharist. How can the Table—the place where God regularly calls us to remember the sufferings of Christ on our behalf—be a truly welcoming place for sinners? The next two articles explore the relationship between evangelism and social concern. Rick Richardson analyzes the delicate balance between the two in the context of college students involved in socially-active campus ministries. John Bowen clarifies the role that evangelization played in the highly lauded contextual and social work of missionary Vincent O’Donovan among the Maasai people in Tanzania. While both articles affirm the integration of word and deed ministries, they issue warnings, caveats, and practical considerations in the working out of the relationship between evangelism and social engagement.

The article by Samantha Schneider takes the theme in another direction by examining the intersection between trauma, theology and narrative theory. Those afflicted with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), asserts Schneider, do not need a narrative imposed upon them, even if that narrative is the Gospel. Instead, they must be given space to discover their own narratives within the larger story of God.

The last full length article, written by yours truly, turns the spotlight on the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS) in Oxford, UK, an evangelical theological institution of higher education that was founded on a vision of the whole gospel. This article, presented at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of OCMS in 2008, offers a perspective of the role that theological education in general and OCMS in particular can play in the holistic missionary movement.

A new feature graces this issue—namely, an interview with an author of a recently published book on evangelism. To kick off *Book Talk*, the name of the new column, Dan Lebo asks a few questions to Paul Chilcote and Lacey Warner, the editors of an ambitious compilation of key articles on evangelism entitled, *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church* (Eerdmans, 2007).

Long time readers of AETE's annual journal will notice several other new features in this issue, the most obvious being the new name—*Witness*. Not to put too much responsibility on a single word, but does it not capture the essence of that to which members of AETE and readers of this journal are wholly committed? We are called to bear witness to the gospel in the world and do it faithfully, sensitively and effectively. The hope, of

course, is that this journal will help us reflect more deeply upon this call.

The other new item is the editor. The vacancy of Art McPhee, the former editor, left some rather large shoes to fill. Thanks for your faithfulness and diligence these last few years, Art. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve AETE's readers in this way.

Please let me know if something in these pages encourages you, raises a question and/or rubs you the wrong way. For what good are journals such as this if they do not generate dialogue and discussion between us?

Happy Reading,

Al Tizon



# Eucharist:

## The Embrace of Liturgy and Mission

*Catherine E. Williams*

Jesus' practice of table fellowship is the ground for an intentionally missional approach to our participation in the Lord's Supper.

Christians all across the world engage in numerous practices for the purpose of expressing our faith. Yet there is at least one identity marker we all share—the ritual of the Eucharist. This ritual has many different names across the spectrum of Christian tradition: the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, the Mass and the Lord's Table, to name some more common designations. However, it is the one observance that just about every worshipping Christian community will agree has been authentically handed down to us by the first followers of Jesus, who himself instituted the practice during the meal we know as the Last Supper.

**Catherine E. Williams** is an MDiv Candidate at Palmer Theological Seminary in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania (USA).

The Eucharistic ritual may be somber or celebratory, mystical or matter-of-fact; but almost always, an observer gains the impression that this is a necessary activity, intrinsic to the faith of the participants. It is not unusual to observe communicants receiving, from the liturgical officiant or minister, the symbols of bread and wine in pietistic reverence. The introspective focus is often well supported by the songs, homilies, and other elements of Eucharistic liturgy. “In remembrance of me” usually translates to recalling the sobering events of Jesus’ suffering and death on our behalf, and in our attempts to avoid “eating and drinking unworthily” we have been known to submit ourselves to scrupulous self-examination. Less common in the Protestant practice of Communion, we may reflect on being mystically joined at that moment with Christ—and with all those who are part of his Body—across the world and down through the ages.

These familiar perspectives associated with the Eucharist all share a markedly inward focus; our attention is drawn to ourselves, to our relationship with Christ, and to our relationship with other Christians. However, this tendency to make the Eucharist “all about us” is a reduction of its original purpose. It is a sad commentary on many observances of the Lord’s Supper that we may be in God’s house, enjoying God’s hospitality, yet unwittingly estranged from God’s heart.

Our faithfulness, as the Body of Christ, to the headship of Christ calls for periodic examination of our beliefs and practices in light of the earthly mission of Christ. If he is the head and we are the body, then Christ’s mission is our mission. *We* are sent to the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed, most of whom are not seated with us in our weekly worship gatherings—they are

more often on the outside, socially marginalized. Ironically, such persons were regularly found at table fellowship with Jesus in the Gospel accounts. If Jesus' practice of table fellowship was any indication of God's disposition towards those who were not considered part of God's fold, then we, as Christ's followers, would more nobly bear the name of Christ if we too would allow our Eucharistic communion with him to escort us "outside the city gate" (Hebrews 13:12).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Jesus' practice of table fellowship is the ground for an intentionally missional approach to our participation in the Lord's Supper.

With that in mind, this essay examines the Eucharistic practices of the Church under four lenses: socio-historical (looking back), ethological (looking around), deontological (looking 'up'), and teleological (looking forward). Words and phrases intrinsic to our analysis will be explained for the purpose of this discussion. Finally, a few practical, corrective measures will be suggested that can balance and enrich our Communion practices by giving them a more outward look.

### **Explanation of Terms**

Before going any further, and for the purpose of clarity and understanding, brief explanations of key terms are needed. *Church* in the context of this writing refers to followers of Jesus Christ who have professed their faith in him and their commitment to his teachings and example. These are people worldwide, who gather routinely to engage in worship practices, and for whom the Bible provides principles normative for the practice of their faith. Mission refers to the outward focus of the Church. This outward look provides an umbrella for a wide scope of attitudes and activities, but it is guided by the actions and attitude of the

historical Jesus, as recorded in the Gospel accounts, particularly in Luke 4:18-19.<sup>2</sup>

As mentioned at the beginning, the Eucharist is called different names by different groups of Christians. In the spirit of ecumenism, these terms will be randomly interchanged throughout this paper, although the term *Eucharist* has the advantage of being the only one that may conventionally—and conveniently—be used as an adjective. Herein the term refers to the symbolic “meal” of bread and wine consumed in ritual response to the request of Jesus at the final Passover meal with his disciples when he said, “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).

The final term to be clarified is *Kingdom of God*, if indeed one may dare attempt to clarify such a ubiquitous New Testament phrase. For the purpose of this paper, the Kingdom of God is the blessed state of humanity and all of creation that demonstrates what it is like to be living under the reigning activity of God. It is a state we can begin to enjoy in the here and now because of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, and on account of the Spirit’s presence in the world. It is also a state whose ultimate expression will come at a future time when “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

### **The Issues at Hand**

Each of the four New Testament Gospel authors sought to communicate the good news about Jesus as they experienced it directly or indirectly. Luke’s perspective receives special attention here on account of his focus on Jesus’ outward, inclusive disposition towards Gentiles—the “others” of Jesus’ day. Eugene

LaVerdiere, who has written about the origins of the Eucharist in Luke's Gospel, claims that Luke:

...tells the story of the Eucharist in a story of meals and journeys with ...Jesus the Son of Man [who] 'has nowhere to rest his head' (9:58). His entire life is thus one great journey in which meals and simple hospitality play a critical part for him as well as for his followers. Jesus, his disciples, all who would follow later, and the church itself are people on a journey, a people of hospitality, both offered and received. The Eucharist is the supreme expression of that hospitality, sustaining them on their journey to the kingdom of God.<sup>3</sup>

Luke records at least ten meal events, including ones hosted by Levi the tax collector (5:27-39), Simon the Pharisee (7:36-50), Martha (10:38-42), Zacchaeus (19:1-10)<sup>4</sup> and other unnamed Pharisees. These meals lead up to the momentous Passover meal (22:14-38), which is followed by two subsequent meals—one at Emmaus (24:13-35) and one in Jerusalem (24:36-53). The hallmark of these meals is their inclusivity. It did not matter who had invited him; Jesus was not hobnobbing at these tables. He was living out the mission as declared in Luke 4:18-19—proclaiming good news to those oppressed and marginalized by society, particularly by the religious establishment of his day. At one meal Jesus had this to say to one of his hosts: “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind...” (Luke 14:12-13). In these words we hear the heart of God wanting to reach out to those not welcomed by society's mainstream. LaVerdiere argues that “by presenting the story of the origins of the Eucharist in a series of ten meals, Luke

showed how Jesus continued to challenge the communities with the attitudes and behavior necessary for dining fully in the kingdom of God.”<sup>5</sup> This challenge continues to confront us as twenty-first century Christians. How do we encounter and remember Jesus in Holy Communion? What is our disposition towards those outside our walls when we come to the Lord’s Table? Do we consider them connected in any way to what we are doing as we celebrate the Mass?

The widespread Eucharistic tendencies among worshipping Christian communities are cause for deep concern. There is the tendency to participate in the Eucharist out of a sense of duty or habit, almost as if satisfying part of a membership agreement. There is also the tendency to value the ritual solely for its mystical and spiritual value—to enjoy the aura of otherworldliness that often surrounds it. Patients in hospitals often request Holy Communion be administered to them almost as a sort of magical enhancement to the physical healing process. The Apostle Paul’s admonition that each person should self-examine prior to participating in the Lord’s Supper has been all too often misconstrued to the point where persons who are most in need of God’s grace have been prohibited from receiving it through this medium. Then there is our disinclination to make concrete connections between the Eucharist and our mission as Christ’s Body. Whether we believe our mission is to make Christian converts or address issues of social injustice is not the point here; it is rather that what we do as communicants is too often disconnected from our everyday lives as people called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Our Eastern Orthodox brothers and sisters have eloquently and repeatedly articulated this missional significance of the Eucharist. In its statement to the World Council of Churches' Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, the Orthodox Advisory Group reminds us that "the efficacy of the church's missionary witness depends on the authenticity of our communion. Our ability to present the light of the kingdom to the world is proportionate to the degree in which we receive it in the Eucharistic mystery."<sup>6</sup> And in keeping with the Orthodox concept of the liturgy following the Liturgy, Petros Vassiliadis declares: "[A]fter all, true evangelism is not aiming at bringing the nations into our religious 'enclosure', but seeks to 'let' the Holy Spirit use both us and those to whom we bear witness to bring about the kingdom of God."<sup>7</sup> After all, it is not the Church that desperately needs our light; it is the world.

### **Socio-Historical Lens: Looking Back**

Having delineated the issues at hand and provided some broad explanation of terms, it is now appropriate to take an historical look as far back as our New Testament origins, identifying some events and trends that have led us from where we started to where we are. It is an historical fact that the Lord's Supper began as a meal where customary food was consumed. The words of Jesus recorded in Luke 2:17-20, which have come to be called the words of institution, were spoken during a Passover meal which Jesus shared with his disciples. "At first what Christians experienced through the bread and cup took place *in the context of a real meal* of food to satisfy daily needs and hunger."<sup>8</sup> In Paul's letter to the Corinthians where he expounds on the significance of this particular meal, he makes reference to some guests feasting handsomely while others go hungry (1 Corinthians 11: 18-22). This

kind of consumption indicates substantially more than the food and drink we consume in our Communion rituals today.

Somewhere between the second and fourth centuries the meal came under increasing regulation by Christian leaders, until it came to be “celebrated with great pomp and ceremony in public buildings, and the meal was no longer in evidence.”<sup>9</sup> Clearly, part of the reason for this movement away from the New Testament beginnings was the “result of the change in social location for the early Christian communities from the house church—with its tradition of hospitality centering on the dining room—to the basilica.”<sup>10</sup> Over time, the communal aspect of the Supper was lost, as was the focus on Christ’s life and mission; these were replaced by a strong emphasis on the sacrifice of Christ.

As early as the first century the Church struggled to withstand cultural influences that infiltrated Christian practices and diluted their original meaning and purpose. This struggle was even more pronounced once Christianity became the popular religion in the fourth century. By the time of the Medieval Church, doctrinal controversies began to arise over the presence of Christ in the sacrifice of the Eucharist. Against the superstitious backdrop of Medieval culture, the Eucharist moved even further away from its Christological center, to the point where there was a “proliferation of private Masses because of a privatized piety and especially a preoccupation with Masses for the dead.”<sup>11</sup>

Years later, Luther, Zwingli, and the other leading Reformers were challenged as they sought to distinguish between the ‘baby’ and the ‘bath water’ of sixteenth century Eucharistic theology and practice. To be sure, they had several points of contention with the Church’s liturgical practices; however their scrutiny was more



trained on the then-current liturgical abuses, and did not take them as far back as Jesus' practice of table fellowship. With the development of the Protestant movement and its subsequent fragmentation into different religious groups, and against the critical, rational background of the Enlightenment, Eucharistic practices became more focused on the individual and less on the worshipping community. This individualistic, pietistic aura is what continues to surround Protestant observances of the Lord's Table today. Not much reference tends to be made of the pursuing nature of the one who first spoke those words of institution, the one who incessantly sought those who needed him, yet who were overlooked. The mindset around the Eucharistic table today is a far departure from the outward looking, missional mindset of Jesus as he broke bread from table to table.

### **Ethological Lens: Looking Around**

From an ethological perspective, the Church still struggles to maintain its purity of purpose against the forces of its surrounding culture. There are many eloquent definitions and descriptions of culture that are grounded in an anthropological perspective. However, this author shares the opinion of those biblical scholars who point out that in some of the Pauline and Johannine uses of the term 'the world,' the writers are referring to the prevailing culture or worldview.<sup>12</sup> Our current, popular worldview is shaped by beliefs, customs, and socially acceptable practices that daily challenge our missional identity as followers of Jesus Christ. A few such values stand out in 'the world' of the United States.

First, there is the blight of individualism that afflicts us; we even qualify it with the word 'rugged' to affirm its strength as a virtue. Liturgical theologian Gordon Lathrop attempts to see this

value as both a blessing and a bane. He believes that, if appropriately balanced with the proper esteem of the entire assembly, the esteem of the individual is in harmony with the gospel. However Lathrop ultimately acknowledges that the more common expression of individualism is not found within the accountability of communal life; it is a selfish one, where “the fulfillment and success of the self can become our major religion, no matter what other name we give this all-consuming value.”<sup>13</sup>

Another modern trend diametrically opposed to the mission of God, Jesus, and the Church is our preoccupation with celebrities and their lifestyles. Our culture seems to tell us that social significance is proportionate to how much fame and fortune a person possesses; ergo those with the *least* fame and fortune—the very ones with whom Jesus often chose to keep company and to whom he ministered—do not seem to be worth our time and effort. Practically speaking, “down-and-outers” are not targeted as the niche of spiritual seekers that would grow our church congregations and programs.

As faithful followers of Jesus we would do well to self-evaluate, to see how much like Jesus (how truly Christian) we may or may not be as we come up against the forces of our culture. In discussing “Christ as the Transformer of Culture,” H. Richard Niebuhr speaks of the Christian life as, “. . . the transformation of all [of our] actions by Christ, so that they are acts of love to God and man, glorify the Father and the Son, and are obedient to the commandment to love one another. It is a life of work, in which the Christian does what he sees the Son doing as the Son does the works of the Father.”<sup>14</sup> What we see Jesus doing in his birth, life, and death is deliberately choosing to identify and suffer with those

who are uncelebrated. When we do as he did, we are transformed by Christ within our culture so we can diffuse Christ's redemptive and transforming grace within our culture.

One other cultural aspect is worth mentioning as it relates to our practice of the Lord's Supper. In first century Mediterranean life, hospitality was a high social priority. It was a shared expectation on the part of host and guest that no one would go hungry once a meal was prepared. Episcopal theologian John Koenig throws insightful light on this topic as he observes that "the term for hospitality used in the New Testament refers literally not to a love of strangers per se but to a delight in the whole guest-host relationship, in the mysterious reversals and gains for all parties which may take place. For believers, this delight is fueled by the expectation that God...will play a role in every hospitable transaction."<sup>15</sup>

The Lord's Supper originated in a social context of open generosity; but even more than an ethnic value, hospitality and generosity to strangers have always been part of God's value system. Today this social ethic is not generally high on our list of North American cultural priorities. We share huge meals at seasonal celebrations such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, but these gatherings are typically exclusive to family members and close friends. For "the others" we give donations of food so that soup kitchens and other relief agencies can take care of those less fortunate. This cultural paradigm is reflected in our churches as we come together around the Lord's Table. Many churches do not allow anyone to participate who does not share their doctrinal or denominational platform. This has led to practices that one post-graduate seminarian has described as, "exclusive abuses which have

plagued the Lord's Supper."<sup>16</sup> Such exclusivity does not represent Jesus, who, even at the Last Supper, chose to dip in the same bowl as his betrayer. It is unfortunate that our current cultural context forcefully militates against the missional, inclusive disposition of Jesus at his table.

### **Deontological Lens: Looking Up**

There is a deontological or ethical perspective to this liturgical embrace of Eucharist and mission. Put simply, the right thing to do is what God did through God's son, Jesus. Some of the names we ascribe to God in worship include: Creator, Sustainer, Provider, and Redeemer. Notice how these reflect the outward-focused nature of God, the way God relates to those who are not God. In Jesus, God's missional character is unmistakable. Jesus stepped out of his divine glory to enter the human environment, seeking, healing, delivering, feeding, and befriending us all the way to his crucifixion.

In one of his parables comparing the Kingdom of Heaven to someone who sowed good seed in a field that was subsequently infiltrated by bad seed, Jesus explained to his disciples that the field is the world and the good seed are the children of the kingdom (Matthew 13: 38). The implication in this parable for mission is the same as in the salt and light metaphor: we are meant to be God's presence and influence in the world. What this means, among other things, for Christian worshipers is that once united with Christ in the act of Holy Communion, we are to take his presence back out into the places where we are planted as good seed. Ralph Keifer admonishes us about this ethical aspect of our nature and mission, when he writes, "As an interpretation of the event of God in the *world* (not just in the Church – what else can the consecration of common bread and wine mean?), the Eucharist

patently has everything to do with ethics in general and social justice in particular.”<sup>17</sup>

Christians who believe that issues which plague our society are outside the concern of the gospel of Jesus Christ would do well to take a fresh look at those around the tables where Jesus dined. These persons were not warmly welcomed in religious gatherings. Jesus was intentional about going outside the religious circles to meet the needs of publicans and sinners where they were. As we follow Jesus, we often find ourselves outside of religious comfort zones, but our faithfulness requires we follow him nonetheless. In the foot-washing narrative John tells us that even while Jesus knew their fragile, deceptive hearts, he showed them an example of power in service and commanded them to go out and do likewise. Mark Labberton reminds us that often “we sit at the Communion table with adulterers, child abusers, betrayers, deniers, coercers, liars...Everyone’s abuse of power should, of course keep us from the table, but not when it is presided over by the One who came to seek and save the lost. The One with all the power takes the towel, stoops, and washes our feet.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Teleological Lens: Looking Forward**

There is one other lens through which we will examine Eucharist and mission—namely, the teleological or forward-looking lens that anticipates the desired outcome God intends for God’s creation. Recent New Testament scholarship is replete with reference to the subject of eschatology. Much of the eschatological conversation is around the concept of the Kingdom of God. Jesus made reference to this theme twice in Luke 22: 15-18 when he promised his disciples that the next time he would eat and drink the Passover meal with them would be at some future time of

fulfillment in the Kingdom of God. This phrase, from the lips of Jesus to the ears of his Jewish followers, resonated with messianic promise. The Jewish understanding of “the Day of the Lord” was a promise of their ultimate freedom from political and sociological oppression. This freedom was to be obtained with fanfare and finality as God would effectively destroy their enemies and oppressors. This time was frequently associated with feasting and abundance, as eloquently expressed in Isaiah 25:6-9:

On this mountain the LORD of hosts  
will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,  
of rich food filled with marrow,  
of well-aged wines strained clear.  
And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the sheet that is spread over all nations;  
he will swallow up death forever.  
Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces  
and the disgrace of his people  
he will take away from all the earth,  
for the LORD has spoken.  
It will be said on that day,  
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him,  
so that he might save us.  
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Feasting and abundance are also featured in the parable Jesus tells to explain what the Kingdom of God is like in Matthew 22:1-10. A wedding banquet is prepared for invited guests, who ultimately do not show up, for one reason or another. The enraged host proceeds to issue a sweeping invitation to everyone in sight so that the wedding hall is eventually filled with guests. The outward-looking, inclusive nature of this banquet is characteristic of the portraits Jesus painted of life in God’s Kingdom. It is also typical of

the way Jesus lived and ministered among people; it is ultimately characteristic of God.

Reflection on this divine magnanimity leads us to consider the eschatological theme of the Eucharist, since Jesus himself made this connection. The *eschaton*, in the minds of many Christians, may conjure up fearful images of beasts and battles; naturally, there are existential concerns around this much-misunderstood event. Kathryn Tanner directs our thoughts, however, to the relational aspect of this topic, which can instruct and inspire us even as we eat and drink around the Lord's Table: "Eschatology's fundamental interest is in the character of this relationship to God and not in what the world is like or what happens to it...at its end. One retains a religious interest in the future of things *as they exist in this new relationship with God*—that is, one wants to know the consequences for the world that this consummate relationship with God brings with it."<sup>19</sup> This relationship of which Tanner speaks is not exclusively between Christians and God; it draws in all of God's creation. Eating and drinking the Eucharistic meal are meant to take us beyond ourselves so we can envision with God the state of all peoples and all creation as we live under God's reign of peace. Even as we anticipate the end of all suffering, sickness, shortage, and pain, we are inspired and empowered by the presence of Christ at the table to do our part in the here and now, even as we wait for the sweet by and by.

Geoffrey Wainwright, the renowned British Methodist theologian, suggests five connections between Holy Communion and the Kingdom of God, one of which is that it is a taste of the Kingdom that links both the earthly and heavenly forms of God's Kingdom. He says, "The Lord's Supper is the reality-filled promise

to be eaten in hope of the final kingdom.”<sup>20</sup> Our remembrance of Jesus at the table gives us hope. We look back to help us see ahead; but our vision must be aligned with God’s vision. It’s not just about us escaping hell and being with God eternally; it’s about God’s enduring love for all of humanity, all of creation, being consummated as God draws the people and the world for whom Christ died into one with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **The Missional Practice of the Eucharist**

We turn now from such lofty thoughts to the daily, weekly, or monthly occurrence of this liturgical act that is one of our identity markers as followers of Christ. How do we participate with Jesus in mind—more specifically with Jesus’ awareness of those who belong at the table but are not there? The first suggestion is probably the most controversial, but we may want to re-examine our doctrines regarding closed and open Communion tables, especially in light of the One whose table it is, Christ, who is at the same time our “food, table-fellow, and host.”<sup>21</sup> We may want to refresh the way we do the Communion ritual by looking at some more contemporary, mission-oriented formats designed to avoid—or jolt us out of—liturgical ruts. Church leaders may want to do their own personal topical study, and then guide their congregations through different themes embedded in the Eucharist, such as fellowship and hospitality, *anamnesis*, covenant, and eschatology, treating all (not just our familiar favorites) as important to our faith and mission.

An even bolder suggestion is that we look for what may be called “Eucharistic opportunities” outside of the sacred ritual where we share community meals and sit at table with “the other” like Jesus did. The concept of the Moravian Love Feast offers such a possibility. If done with missional overtones, this can be a very



sacred time and space for the kind of human exchange in which God participates as host, and in which we may hear Jesus say, “I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in.” (Matthew 25:35ff).

One of the most powerful things that happens around the Lord’s Table is the communion we have with Christ, the host at the table. As we commune with and remember Jesus, we would do well to remember not just his death and his second coming, but also how he lived. If during his earthly life he remained fully connected with those he came to seek and to save, particularly at meals, then when we gather around his table to enjoy his hospitality, we must follow his gaze away from those who are secure in the fold to those who are not. Such is the embrace of liturgy and mission.

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: All scripture references are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

<sup>2</sup> It is helpful here to interject that Jesus’ mission was the mission of his Father who sent him. Note, for example, the remarkable similarity of images and metaphors in Psalm 146: 7-10 where the psalmist speaks of God as setting prisoners free, opening the eyes of the blind, lifting up those who are bowed down, watching over the strangers, and upholding the orphans and the widow.

<sup>3</sup> Eugene LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom of God* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Although no meal is mentioned in this passage, hospitality is certainly implied.

<sup>5</sup> LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom*, 195.

<sup>6</sup> “Go Forth in Peace: Orthodox Perspectives on Mission,” in *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization*, 1, eds. James Scherer and Stephen Bevans (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 214.

<sup>7</sup> Petros Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness* (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1998), 38.

<sup>8</sup> John Reumann, *The Supper of the Lord* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 8

<sup>9</sup> Encyclopedia of Religion, Second Edition, s.v. “Eucharist.”

- 10 New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, s.v. "Eucharist."
- 11 The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism, s.v. "Eucharist."
- 12 H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1951), 32.
- 13 Gordon W. Lathrop, "Liturgy and Mission in the North American Context," in *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission*, ed. Thomas H. Schattauer (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 205.
- 14 Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 204.
- 15 John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 8.
- 16 Robert William Canoy, "Perspectives on Eucharistic Theology" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987), 145.
- 17 Ralph A. Keifer, "Liturgy and Ethics: Some Unresolved Dilemmas," in *Living No Longer for Ourselves*, eds. Kathleen Hughes and Mark R. Francis (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press), 68.
- 18 Mark Labberton, *The Dangerous Act of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 121.
- 19 The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics, s.v. "Ecclesiology and Ethics."
- 20 Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (New York, NY: Oxford University, 1981), 58.
- 21 Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 58.

# Evangelism and Social Concern:

## How Do We Maintain a Healthy Balance?

*Rick Richardson*

Why do groups that move toward social concern seem to lose evangelistic vitality?

In this paper, I explore the factors for maintaining a healthy balance between social concern and evangelism. Although there is no biblical dichotomy between vibrant evangelism and active social ministry, in practice most churches and ministries focus either on one or the other. Moreover, as the church has developed the social concern side of the gospel, she has often muted the evangelistic and particularistic side of the gospel—and vice versa. In a postmodern culture and postcolonial world where actions speak much louder than words, maintaining this balance between word and deed has become even more critical if the church is to have any influence at all.

**Rick Richardson** is Associate Professor and Director of the M.A. in Evangelism and Leadership at Wheaton College and Graduate School in Wheaton, Illinois (USA).

## The Rise of Evangelical Social Conscience

To explore these issues and how they are being played out, I conducted ethnographic research on urban service projects among evangelical students at Northwestern University in Chicago. I wanted to explore why groups that move toward social concern seem to lose evangelistic vitality.

Many key members of churches and ministries today are participating in these service projects, both domestically and internationally, and these projects are having a significant effect on participants' understanding of evangelism and social concern. At least 1.6 million people are going overseas each year and nearly that many are serving somewhere domestically.<sup>1</sup> In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, domestic project involvement skyrocketed.

In 2005 and 2006, I worked with forty-four evangelical students involved in campus ministry groups at Northwestern University who attended a one-week spring break "urban plunge" in an under-resourced African-American community in Chicago. This two-year qualitative study included participant observation, focus groups, face-to-face interviews, and questionnaires administered both during and after the urban immersion experiences.

There were ten different sites for service, located in five different Chicago neighborhoods: North Lawndale, East and West Garfield Parks, Cabrini Green, and the Austin community. Service activities included helping with kids' programs, painting walls, sorting clothes, teaching computers to adults, distributing leaflets on the street, filing and other administrative work. The predominant service assignment was to work with kids in after school programs or daycare situations (54% of the students), with most of the others working on facility improvements (40%). I

visited a number of the service sites, and then spent intensive time at one of them.

In addition to the service projects, students were also given substantive orientation on a theology of the kingdom of God and on its application to issues of race, ethnicity and poverty. This orientation, which involved not only teaching but also very effective dissonance-creating simulations, had a strong impact on the students, especially because it was then combined with experiences in the communities that reinforced and made concrete the teachings and the simulations.

The impact upon the students as a result of their involvement in these service projects can be measured in part by notable changes in their:

- understanding of the gospel
- explanations of the cause of poverty
- awareness and appreciation of cultural difference
- stereotypes of racial, ethnic, cultural and economic others, trusting these “perceived others” more than they did before the project.

The most relevant finding in relation to maintaining the balance between evangelism and social concern was the shift many of these students made in their understanding and practice of the gospel. Before the project, many students said that the gospel can be summed up as follows: human beings sin, Jesus died for our sins so we can be forgiven, and if we will accept his death and commit our lives we can be with God forever. This way of talking about the gospel is summarized in a presentation called “the bridge diagram,” which many of the students had used previously. The bridge diagram illustrates the chasm between God and human beings,

defines the chasm as sin, and shows how the cross bridges the chasm between God and human beings by bringing reconciliation. After the project, more students talked about the good news of the kingdom, and that the gospel is about personal *and* social transformation, and not just about individuals crossing the bridge back to God.<sup>2</sup>

A key to bringing about this change was orientation sessions that focused on Jesus' version of the good news in the Synoptic Gospels: "The time (*kairos*) has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news (Mark 1:15 NIV)." Another key was the students' experience of a church or ministry that demonstrated justice and reconciliation as core issues as well as central features of their ministries.<sup>3</sup>

In light of these kinds of student responses, we can say that many project participants gained an understanding of the gospel that focused on the kingdom of God, and that this larger understanding enabled them to explain their newfound concern for the poor, the suffering, and the structures that influence their lives. In addition, students gained valuable experiences and formed convictions that worked well for them in their larger liberal university context. I contend that these projects helped create for students a new plausibility structure for their faith. Plausibility structures refer to the social base for a particular belief system that makes it seem real to its adherents.<sup>4</sup> Many of the students in the study were in a transition away from a very conservative church background that had not provided an adequate plausibility structure for them to engage in college life at Northwestern University and in the larger society with their faith intact. The students needed to negotiate the distance between their

conservative religious plausibility structure (or social base) and their secular university social base. The urban projects provided bridging strategies for them, and a new social base that reinforced the relevance and reality of their faith in their new social context.

### **The Rise of Social Concern at the Expense of the Spiritual**

At the same time, many participants paid a price for their newfound, more socially acceptable beliefs. Many participants lost some of their focus on the spiritual dimension of the salvation of individuals. These students shifted in their understanding of the gospel—moving from an individualistic focus to a more corporate focus, which was based on adopting a theology of the kingdom of God, and exploring the need for justice and systems thinking in relation to social change. These changes represent a very significant shift in the “subcultural toolkit” traditionally held by evangelicals as posited by sociologist Christian Smith, and therefore are potential indicators of a change in evangelical subcultural identity and distinctiveness.<sup>5</sup>

According to Smith, evangelicals have a very distinctive strategy for social change—a strategy he calls “the personal influence strategy.” In the evangelical view, conversion leads to personal transformation, which leads these transformed individuals to exercise their influence upon society. Although this strategy helps make evangelicalism strong as a religious movement, it also significantly limits evangelicals’ ability to understand how the social world actually works and their capacity to formulate appropriate, useful responses and solutions to social, economic, political, and cultural problems. How ought we interpret this shift from an individualistic gospel and a personal influence strategy, to a more

corporate gospel of the kingdom of God and a greater dependence on systems thinking for social change?

In brief, the interpretations of rising evangelical social engagement in relation to evangelical identity and distinctiveness include the following:

1. Growing evangelical social engagement is a sign of increasing cultural capitulation to the process of secularization that will lead to evangelicalism's eventual loss of distinctiveness and vibrancy,<sup>6</sup> much like happened with the earlier Social Gospel movement.
2. Alternatively, growing evangelical social engagement is a sign of the process of renegotiating evangelical subcultural identity in ways that can increase its impact without decreasing its distinctiveness and vigor as a movement.<sup>7</sup>
3. Somewhere in between these options is the thesis that rising evangelical social engagement is a market driven response to the changing religious needs and motivations of constituents, and thus represents a blend of accommodation and renegotiation strategies.<sup>8</sup>

From my research, I have come to the conclusion that option three is closest to the truth: increased social engagement for these students reflects both an effective renegotiation strategy that has the potential of extending and deepening evangelical vibrancy and impact, and yet also reflects growing social accommodation—which could lead to decreasing evangelical vibrancy and impact, as has happened in some mainline churches. Both dynamics are present, so this period of time is crucial as evangelical college students (and evangelicals in general) move down one path or the



other. How do we insure that *increased* evangelical social engagement is primarily a renegotiation strategy leading to increased vibrancy and impact (à la Smith), and not primarily an expression of increased accommodation, and therefore a precursor to *decreased* vibrancy and impact?

### **Societal Accommodation**

Here the insightful studies of sociologists Roger Finke and Rodney Stark are very helpful.<sup>9</sup> Finke and Stark theorize and then demonstrate across a broad variety of denominations that churches over time—especially as they gain economic power and as their members increase in economic status—nearly always shift their emphasis in three ways: 1) toward this world and away from the next, 2) toward socially respectable ethics and away from individually and socially radical ethics, 3) toward doctrinal and systematic clarity and away from “primal religious experience.”<sup>10</sup> So churches then move from high tension with the environment toward increasingly lower levels of tension. As they become “successful” in society, they also drift toward lower tension with the surrounding environment, and emphasize this-worldly aspects of faith, theology, and practice more and more.

When this occurs, a religious body will become increasingly less able to satisfy members who desire a high-tension version of faith. As discontent grows, these people will (rightfully) begin to complain that the group is abandoning its original positions and practices. The growing conflict within the group will eventually result in a split, and the faction desiring a return to higher tension will leave to found a new sect. If this movement proves successful, over time the new sect, too, will be transformed into a church and

once again the split will occur. The result is an endless cycle of sect formation, transformation, schism, and rebirth.

The key questions are these: Is evangelicalism losing the battle for continuing vibrancy, vitality and growth in its mission, ministry and identity? Will evangelicalism now follow the path of dwindling mainline denominations and the earlier, now largely vanished, Social Gospel movement of the early 1900s?

#### **Four Signs of Societal Accommodation**

I would like to suggest four key signs, adapted from Finke and Stark, for measuring whether we evangelicals are renegotiating our identity in a way that will maintain our engaged distinctiveness, or whether we are instead becoming more denomination-like in our social accommodation—more this-worldly, and therefore on a trajectory toward decreasing numbers and impact. I will also apply these four signs to my ethnographic case study to explore whether the trajectory of the evangelical students I researched are indeed moving toward accommodation and dwindling growth and vitality, or toward renegotiation and increased vitality and impact.

The most certain sign that a religious group has accommodated to a significant degree is that new sects are formed in response. The schisms that led to the different Methodist progeny (i.e. Free Methodist, holiness movements, Pentecostalism) emphasize how substantially the Methodist church had secularized in the late 1800s.<sup>11</sup> So it would be very interesting to explore whether groups have arisen at Northwestern that fall under the category of reactionary sect. I did not obtain recent data on this question, except to note that there are twenty-five Christian groups on campus, and several of them launched during the period

in which the groups I looked at became more engaged in social concern.

A second sign that a religious group has accommodated is the relaxation of its moral code to the degree that the group shares the ethics and morality of the larger society and has lost its ethical distinctiveness. In general, the students I interviewed certainly had come to more nearly share the social ethics of their university setting. One staff person discussed how, during the early 2000s when the Northwestern campus Christian group first pursued the theology of the kingdom as a basis for social engagement, there was an influx of students with mainline Protestant—but not evangelical—backgrounds into the chapter, and there were some disagreements over sexual ethics between some of these students and the staff workers that resonated with the sexual ethical debates going on presently within some of the mainline denominations. It should be noted, however, that most of the students I interviewed were from self-identified evangelical backgrounds; their change was due not to their denominational background, but rather to their experiences since beginning their studies at Northwestern.

A third significant sign of accommodation is loss in the vigor and effectiveness of evangelistic efforts. It is difficult for secularized faiths to evangelize because evangelism is no longer *the* mission of the church; the adequacy of sanctification and salvation moments are questioned as gradualism and process explanations of conversion become more central; and the clear boundaries between Christian and non-Christian fade.<sup>12</sup> More generally, evangelism tends to be stronger in groups that emphasize ultimate concerns for spiritual salvation and judgment.

The evidence on evangelistic vigor and effectiveness at Northwestern was mixed. Staff were very committed to evangelism and had made it a central value for all the years during which they had also pursued justice and social involvement. However, conversions have been substantially lower since 2001, the year that began the fellowship-wide transition toward the centrality of justice and social issues, such as multi-ethnicity.

The numbers might be helpful here. Prior to 2001, average conversion rates were 7.4%, meaning that out of every 100 students involved overall, 7.4 students converted to faith in Christ. Northwestern University campus Christian groups at this stage were known as having an effective evangelistic ministry, showing higher than average conversion ratio when compared to its organization's region (7.4% to the region wide average of 6.4%). For the six years 2001 to 2006, the conversion rate was at 3.2%, a lower than average conversion rate when compared to its region (5.9% for the same period). So commitment and discourse about evangelism remained high, but effectiveness of the message, methods and strategies was apparently low. Is this decrease due to accommodation, or to changes in personnel, or to the increasing number of priorities, insuring that any one priority gets less attention and resources, or just to less effective methods and strategies? My data cannot answer that question conclusively, but nevertheless suggests that the social accommodation process has played a part.

A fourth and final indicator of accommodation is the transition from vivid otherworldliness to vague otherworldliness, in which conceptual thinking takes precedence over emotional appeal and actions to better this world take precedence over actions to

connect people to spiritual issues and the next world. The evidence suggests that such a shift did take place among the students in the study. For one, a number of students themselves raised this issue of whether the gospel was becoming politicized, whether it was becoming a social gospel without a spiritual focus. One student in particular talked about how her focus on social issues had been accompanied by a loss of emphasis on themes of sin, guilt, repentance, and prayer:

In the Gospel presentation that staff made (on the good news of the kingdom), my non-Christian friend still didn't get the fact that we were sinful. And so later on she was like, "Oh, I didn't know that." Then, two weeks later she heard a talk on prayer and she was like, "I didn't know we were to pray." It was new to her. So, then I realized that my friend didn't know all this basic stuff and I was like, "Oh, my gosh. What was I thinking?" I was just talking about all these things about social change, but no idea about who God is, you know, what it meant to repent, what all these things meant. So it's like, "Wait a second. You have to do both."<sup>13</sup>

Secondly, some students emphasized how the gospel directs Christians to work for social change, but did not articulate how God was the agent. In other words, for these students, the gospel of the kingdom was becoming a gospel of human activism, much like it did during the heyday of the Social Gospel movement.<sup>14</sup> The leaders would certainly have said that making the focus of the gospel entirely social and entirely horizontal was not their goal. What's more, they would also emphasize that their agenda and vision came directly out of Scripture, not sociology or politics, and that they are recovering parts of the gospel that have been neglected. However, by critiquing an individualistic gospel focused

on personal sin and repentance as a way to emphasize the corporate and social dimensions of the gospel, they may have overcompensated for a past imbalance, thereby leading students to become unbalanced in the other direction. In my interviews with them, students did appear to go through an inner struggle around how to put these two poles together: the individual and corporate, the spiritual and the social.

### **Student Volunteer Movement Redux?**

One of the widely known and often cited evangelical narratives that warns against societal accommodation is the narrative of the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) and its umbrella organization, the Student Christian Movement (SCM). During its history, the SVM shifted from a primary focus on evangelism and conversion to a broader focus on contemporary issues like justice, ecumenism, and racism.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the SVM also rejected the penal substitution theory of the atonement as the primary or even a valid way to understand the gospel.<sup>16</sup> Similarities between the changes in the SVM and among Northwestern evangelical groups raise thought-provoking questions about the trajectory of these shifts among students. Are these students and the projects in which they participate on a trajectory that will also parallel the SVM, which became theologically much more socially engaged and this-worldly and subsequently gradually diminished in size and influence?

My research suggests that the dynamics of accommodation were visible in the increasing commitment to social concern that is valuable in larger university and social contexts, but less valuable in the traditional, more spiritually-focused and conversion-oriented contexts from which many of the students came. On the other

hand, students celebrated the biblical as opposed to secular sociological or political basis for their new thinking and priorities, and they also articulated ideas about how to use their new thinking and priorities to reach more people and bring them into Christian faith. So the potential for distinctive renegotiation as opposed to accommodation was there.

What is also clear is that many of the students (though not all) were not yet able to integrate their new thinking and priorities with their earlier commitments to evangelism, conversion, repentance, personal faith in Christ, forgiveness and the cross. They were left with two different and largely “unintegrated” understandings of the gospel and priorities for action and needed more help in this integration effort. Specifically, students needed help in seeing how a broader theology of mission, rooted in the *missio Dei*—God’s mission—profoundly affirms the mission of the church as herald, calling people into initiation into God’s kingdom. This is the ministry of evangelism. But equally, the church’s participation in God’s mission involves her in being a sign and symbol of the kingdom, a pointer to the new world that God is bringing into being through Christ. Thus, the church must seek to picture this new world to come through participation in the “here and now” for justice, reconciliation, and care of the earth. When the church ceases to embody what she proclaims, her words become hollow and lose all concrete meaning.

### **Some Ways Forward**

To be clear, I am not suggesting that Christian students at Northwestern University give up their new, larger understandings of the gospel, race, justice and multi-ethnicity; rather I am suggesting that they take their cue from some of the ministries

with which they work. These ministries, as is true of many urban and minority ministries, have done fairly well at integrating broader conceptual perspectives on the gospel, poverty, and race without diluting spiritual commitments, moral and ethical strictness, or evangelistic enthusiasm, passion and effectiveness.

I also suggest that leaders working to broaden their own and their followers' understandings and practices of justice, reconciliation, and multi-ethnicity seek out mentors and leaders who have effectively integrated the tension between social commitment and personal commitment, ethical respectability and moral strictness, justice commitments and evangelistic passion, and this-worldly engagement and otherworldly vividness.

The recommendations that emerged out of my research included pursuing:

- clearer ethical distinctives.
- more vigorous evangelistic focus
- better integration, rather than either/or thinking about the gospel, evangelism and social engagement.
- better mentors (e.g. urban and global south)

We in the broader evangelical movement are at a critical juncture in renegotiating evangelical subcultural identity and mission. Will we use the present opportunity for renegotiation, pursuing and living out a gospel that addresses race, justice and poverty while maintaining our historically strong spiritually vibrant focus in evangelism, ethics and the gospel of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus? Or will we dichotomize evangelism and social concern, this world and the world to come, and gradually lose our distinctiveness and increase our accommodation? If so,



dwindling mainline denominations and the long-absent earlier Social Gospel movement portend the future.

---

1 Robert Priest, Terry Dischinger, Steve Rasmussen, and C.M. Brown, "Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement," *Missiology* 34 (4 October 2006), 432.

2 Rick Richardson, "Reshaping Evangelicalism's Future Leaders," (Ph.D. diss., Trinity International University, 2007), 163.

One student expressed well this shift in the understanding of the gospel in the following way: "It's not just Jesus coming to save you from your sins and you can go off to heaven in a few years when you die. I really think it is Jesus coming to bring the Kingdom of God here to restore individual relationships, to restore communities and societies, to restore our relationship with God too."

Another student, reflecting on this same shift, expressed the way in which this bigger understanding of the gospel has immense social implications: "The Kingdom of God is a bigger picture than the bridge diagram, working as Christians to transform the world, believing that Jesus has already conquered sin, and hoping and believing in Jesus coming to reign over this world, and that it is our job to see the Kingdom of God occur while we're living, in the here and now. I think fighting social injustice is part of it."

3 Richardson, "Reshaping Evangelicalism's Future Leaders," 164. One student talked about this combination as follows: "You know, it sounds like a nice, idealistic gospel: God has come to help the poor. But it's only when you see it happening and see it in your life that you begin to have a glimpse and understand that this is what the gospel is talking about. And seeing what's going on there, it gives you a glimpse into what the Kingdom of God really is, and a big part of what Christianity is about."

4 Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 45.

5 Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 188-190.

6 James Davison Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987) and Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

7 John Schmalzbauer and Gray Wheeler, "Between Fundamentalism and Secularization: Secularizing and Sacralizing Currents in the Evangelical Debate on Campus Lifestyle Codes," *Sociology of Religion* 57, no. 3 (1996), 241-257.

8 Roger Finke, Avery Guest, and Rodney Stark, "Mobilizing Local Religious Markets: Religious Pluralism in New York State, 1855 to 1865," *American Sociological Review* 61 (no. 2, 1996), 203-219; Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

9 Finke and Stark, *The Churching of America*, 163.

10 See also Harvey Gallagher Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995), 81-83, 86.

11 Finke and Stark, *The Churching of America*, 163.

12 Finke and Stark, *The Churching of America*, 163.

13 Richardson, "Reshaping Evangelicalism's Future Leaders," 323.

14 Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1917).

15 David M. Howard, *Student Power in World Evangelism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1970, 92.

16 Keith Hunt and Gladys M. Hunt, *For Christ and the University: The Story of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship-USA, 1940-1990* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 57.

# Evangelism and Social Concern Among the Maasai:

## The Mission of Vincent Donovan Thirty-Five Years Later

*John P. Bowen*

Did Donovan's vision succeed?

Vincent Donovan was a Roman Catholic missionary to the Maasai people of Tanzania. He belonged to the Order of the Holy Ghost, more commonly these days called the Spiritans, a missionary order refounded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was in Tanzania for sixteen years beginning in 1957, came home in 1973, and wrote a book about his experiences called *Christianity Rediscovered*, which was recently republished in a twenty-fifth anniversary edition.

I was drawn to this book because it is a dramatic first-person account of a Western missionary encountering a people and a culture radically different from his own, and trying to discern how the gospel connects with those people. Donovan was perfectly well aware, even in 1978, that Christians in the West were increasingly

**John P. Bowen** is Associate Professor of Evangelism at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto in Toronto, Ontario (Canada).

facing a similar missionary encounter, as Lesslie Newbigin and others have reinforced since. He actually says in the introduction, “The book [is] really written about the church in Europe and America.”<sup>1</sup>

I suspect everyone who has read the book wants to know what happened after Donovan left. He founded numerous Maasai Christian communities, and was determined that they should be authentically Maasai, and not just a pale reflection of a Western denomination. He was impressed with Roland Allen’s reading of the Book of Acts,<sup>2</sup> that Paul planted churches, and then moved on; as a result, Donovan determined not to stay involved with the churches he founded. So did his vision succeed? Did they survive? Are they genuinely Christian and authentically Maasai? Donovan himself never returned to Tanzania and died in 2000.

My curiosity led to a visit to Tanzania in August 2006, where three missionaries of Donovan’s order are still working and living out his vision. That led to further contacts with former colleagues of Donovan’s in Pittsburgh, and to a meeting with Donovan’s sister Nora, who gave me access to the monthly letters he had sent home from Tanzania to the U.S. between 1957 and 1973. I have edited these letters, and they are due to be published as a book by Wipf and Stock sometime in 2010.

### **Donovan’s Evolution**

One of the things that motivated Donovan was a heart for evangelism—or evangelization, as Catholics more often call it. This was not something he had from the beginning, but something that grew in him over the years.

Early on, for example, he is proud of the fact that missionaries need to be generalists. He says in a letter of August 1959 that a

missionary must be “pastor, principal of school, architect, mason, carpenter, painter, plumber, mechanic, judge, doctor, cook, employer, administrator, accountant, diplomat, explorer, lawyer, beggar, [and] priest.” But then, by April 1965, he is bemoaning the fact that “. . . many of the priests and other missionaries who were working in East Africa were doing . . . a million and one things—but they were not teaching religion. And you know, that is actually why they came to Africa—to teach religion—or ‘to preach the Gospel,’ as it says in the Bible.”

The main efforts of his colleagues had been to start hospitals and schools, which Donovan called “the life-line of missionary effort.”<sup>3</sup> Around 1951, Fr. Gene Hillman (one of the missionaries I interviewed) was assigned to Arusha parish, which included the town itself, the surrounding areas, the colonial plantations, and all of Maasailand—a total of 24,000 square miles. It was certainly the case that in the schools, students were taught the Christian faith, and encouraged to receive baptism, but by the time Donovan came on the scene there was little to show for it. He writes,

There are hundreds of Catholic Masai. But most of them are schoolboys, and all of them are scattered over thousands and thousands of square miles, without any vital relation to each other or to the church of which they are a part. Many of them on leaving school, after Standard Four or Standard Eight, return to an environment that is so foreign to the Christian life that they are simply swallowed up in paganism, retaining not much more than their Christian names.<sup>4</sup>

I remember recently meeting a Masai warrior, all decked out in his battle gear, who told me his name was John. I asked him if he was a Christian and he said he was. I asked him then why he became a Christian and he said, “Because I went to school.”

But the last he saw of Christianity was the last day he spent in school. He thought it was no more necessary to continue on with the practice of Christianity than it could have been to continue on with the study of Geography after he left school. Religion and Geography were both school subjects.<sup>5</sup>

I began to wonder if it would be possible to leave aside schools and education, leave aside hospitals and medicine, leave aside all social works and go directly to the Maasai and preach the gospel directly to them.<sup>6</sup> I began to wonder not only if it could be possible, but also if it wouldn't be far better.<sup>7</sup>

With this conviction—that the only task of the missionary was evangelism—and the permission of his bishop, Donovan approached the Maasai directly and offered to teach them the Christian faith. No Maasai village refused him, and within a year there were baptisms of whole villages. It seemed as though Donovan's thesis was proven—that the job of the missionary is primarily evangelism, and that the best approach to evangelism is the direct one.

### **The Situation Today**

So does this work of “first evangelization” continue today? Have the missionaries managed to avoid involvement in schools and hospitals? The answer to the first is, “Yes,” and to the second, “No.” Two stories are relevant.

One priest I spoke to was Fr. Pat Patten. When he first came to Tanzania in 1977, inspired directly by Donovan's writing, he did primary evangelization for ten years, until he was visiting seventy-two villages for ministry. Now, however, he has switched from evangelistic and pastoral ministry and runs the Flying Medical

Service, ferrying people from isolated areas to the hospitals. He says:

We see more and more people coming for clinics. . . . You know, I'm working in those areas now with the aircraft and we purposely don't do any kind of evangelization. . . . I'm a firm believer in the gospel. Francis of Assisi [allegedly] said that you preach always and that if it's absolutely necessary you might use words.<sup>8</sup>

It is important to note that in that context he is not denying the importance of speaking the words of the gospel: he himself did that for many years. But he has a deep conviction that the words are “out there” among the Maasai, growing like yeast (to use Jesus' metaphor), and that what is needed more is actions to demonstrate the truthfulness of the words.

The second story concerns the missionary I spent most time with—Fr. Ned Marchessault, who was trained in the techniques of “first evangelization” by Donovan. When Ned went to Loliondo:

Vince was there, and he had just done his first baptisms. . . . So he took me around with him. He had a tent. And we would go around and I watched what he did. . . . I was with him for, I guess, pretty close to a year, and we went around with the tent. That was in about '67, I guess—yeah '67. And then he went home and I took over the Maasai work from him, you see, at that time.<sup>9</sup>

Ned, now based in Endulen, near the Ngorongoro crater, continues the work of first evangelization, still inspired by Donovan. “He gave that initial talk to us in Arusha; he had us all fired up—and it still carries me to this day. It's still the source of the impetus for the kind of work that we do.” He goes on to explain:

My first two years in Endulen, I did evangelization in the Maasai villages in this general area, within a twenty mile radius. Then I had the first baptisms of Maasai villages in the Endulen area, and these places became Christian communities. After this I moved to the Ngorongoro crater area, evangelized in various villages and again established centers. Finally, I moved to Nainokanoka on the other side of the crater and did the same thing, evangelizing and eventually establishing Christian communities in that area. . . . I go directly to work with Maasai villages as villages, I teach the whole group together, elders, women and the whole family, and then make a real effort to have those traditional leaders continue as leaders in the church.

The process is almost identical to that described by Donovan.

What then of social concern in Ned's ministry? I asked him as we drove to a mass in a remote Maasai church. Ned believes that education has become a necessity. His rationale is simple and pragmatic: "Well, without education, the Maasai people are going to cease to exist as a people. We need a voice in the decision making process about everything. And if you reject education, well, you're rejecting their survival."

Schooling is not a value in isolation from the rest of life. According to Ned, it relates to the crucial issues facing the Maasai, such as:

Land, water, decisions about health of both animals and people. Local government, in the sense that people don't get their rights, because outsiders are primarily the ones who are in control. Permanent water continues to be alienated at an alarming rate. In many parts of Maasailand land is being alienated. There are huge seed companies from Holland in central Maasailand.



With financial support of as much as \$14,000 per year from friends in the U.S. (mainly retired Spiritan missionaries), Ned has sponsored many Maasai young people to train for different professions so they can help their own people:

We have a girl who just graduated from law school and two boys who are lawyers now. Four of our girls have completed Teacher Training College and two more are in training. Two girls are in medical school and another is about to begin medical studies.

Ned's monthly letters all tell of stories of young people going away to school and returning to their Maasai villages to serve with their newly acquired skills.

I asked Ned what Donovan would have thought about such efforts going into something he considered secondary and even detrimental to true missionary work. Ned was unwilling to speculate. His attitude is that Donovan "gave the basic philosophy and then we re-implemented it as we saw it should [be]." This statement seems as good a summary as any of how Donovan's legacy has evolved.

### **Conclusion**

The Spiritan mission to the Maasai, then, has been through several phases. First came the establishment of schools and hospitals, and evangelization through the schools. This did not result in the establishment of any Christian communities, however, nor (in most cases) of lasting discipleship. Donovan tried to redress the balance by breaking away almost entirely from the ministry of schools and hospitals, and taking the gospel directly to the Maasai. This led to the establishment of numerous village-based Christian communities, and to many other Spiritan missionaries adopting his same approach of direct evangelization, with great fruitfulness.

However, over the years, the physical and social needs of the Maasai have increased, particularly as the government has tried to limit their nomadic lifestyle, and as economic pressures have threatened their way of life, until (according to Father Ned) their very existence as a distinctive people is in danger.

This has caused the missionaries to stress the need to help the Maasai through other means than evangelization—although that continues, mostly through trained Maasai catechists. The missionaries have been careful not to be paternalistic in their help, but rather have been catalytic in the training of Maasai young people, who can return and give professional leadership to their own, not least in areas like the environment, law and education.

To put this in theological categories, while word and deed properly belong together in the *missio Dei*, and in the ministry of Jesus, there are times when, for pragmatic reasons, one will temporarily need to be emphasized more than the other. Donovan's emphasis was needed at the time, since evangelism was being undervalued and neglected. Later, however, circumstances changed, and it was necessary for the balance to shift accordingly.

A final tribute to the Spiritans and their work is in order. Some years ago, then-First Lady Hillary Clinton visited Tanzania and asked to meet some Maasai. Father Ned was the contact for the meeting. At the end of their time together, Ms. Clinton asked the Maasai elders what the United States government could do for them. There was a long silence, and then one of the elders said, "Could you send us more missionaries like Father Ned?" Unfortunately, that was beyond the scope of even the U.S. government. But it is a measure of how these men are valued, these

who have given their lives to bring the gospel of Christ to the Maasai—both in word and in deed.

---

1 Vincent J. Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978), xi.

2 See Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (World Dominion Press 1930; Eerdmans 2001).

3 Letter, February 1963

4 Letter, May 1967. Cf. the section “Ndangoya” in chapter 2 of *Christianity Rediscovered*.

5 Letter, May 1967.

6 His letter to Bishop Durning (also a Spiritan) on this issue (see *Christianity Rediscovered*, chapter 2) is dated May 1966. Hillman comments: “The bishop was approachable . . . and he would encourage a person, ‘Go try it!’” Fr. Gerry Kohler, another colleague, adds: “Loliondo [is] where Durning cut his teeth, and so he had a soft spot for Loliondo to begin with.” (Personal conversation, June 2007.)

7 Letter, May 1967

8 Personal conversation, August 2006.

9 This and subsequent quotes from Fr. Ned are from a personal conversation, August 2006.



# The Place of the Gospel Narrative in the Aftermath of Trauma

*Samantha Schneider*

Considerations of evangelism must include the question of what the “Good News” might look like for those who lost everything, endured an unspeakable traumatic experience, and are now caught in the long struggle towards recovery.

Given the occurrence of events such as Hurricane Katrina and the Iraq war—as well as our growing knowledge of the devastating effects of war, physical and sexual abuse, and domestic violence—post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is becoming a commonplace term; and the number of known PTSD sufferers, unfortunately, has grown dramatically.<sup>1</sup> Trauma is defined as an event that involves death or injury, the threat of death or injury, or a threat to one’s safety and physical integrity. Trauma is additionally defined as an

**Samantha Schneider** is a Clinical Social Worker at North Suffolk Mental Health Association in Boston, Massachusetts (USA) and an MDiv/MSW Graduate of Boston University.

event that causes overwhelming feelings of fear, hopelessness, and helplessness, and that shatters one's sense of trust and safety. PTSD describes a certain set of symptoms that many, though not all, survivors experience in the aftermath of a traumatic event. These symptoms include constant vigilance and hyper alertness, re-experiencing of the event through nightmares or flashbacks, disruption in interpersonal relationships, changes in sleep and appetite, and episodes of disassociation. Disasters, such as hurricanes, are depicted as a form of ongoing trauma that moves through different phases, from the threat to the recovery.

Hurricane Katrina, however, does not fit the traditional categories of disaster trauma. The reasons are many: the lack of a clear endpoint to the disaster, the fact that there were multiple traumatic factors, the phenomenon of prolonged displacement for survivors, the race and class issues that emerged in the recovery process, the lack of support for survivors, and survivors' inability to be involved in the rebuilding process. Because of these factors, the narratives of those who have survived Hurricane Katrina are usually long, complicated, and tangled in situations of ongoing trauma.

Given the current prevalence of trauma, considerations of evangelism must include the question of what the "Good News" might look like for those who lost everything, endured an unspeakable traumatic experience, and are now caught in the long struggle towards recovery. There is a new and powerful call to examine where it might be that these survivors find themselves in the Gospel story. For the purpose of this paper, the descriptive term "Gospel narrative" refers specifically to the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Traditional Christian religious narratives, based on Christ's path from suffering and death to resurrection, tend to favor a certain trajectory: from traumatic and painful experience to a sense of renewed hope and purpose, which is brought about by the personal meaning one finds in suffering, or perhaps by the discovery of the divine purpose of the experience. I would argue, however, that many survivors, especially those in prolonged and complex traumatic situations such as the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, find it difficult to identify with this narrative. There is an inherent danger in imposing the traditional Gospel narrative on the experiences of others. A post-disaster context creates a call for more imaginative and creative ways for trauma survivors to find themselves in the Gospel stories, thereby examining the power of the gospel for those suffering.

This examination is important not only because it may reveal ways that survivors of Hurricane Katrina can find themselves in the Gospels and make sense of their suffering in a religious context, but also because it may provide information on what the gospel can look like for social service providers working with survivors. Though not evangelists in the traditional sense, Christian social service providers who wish to incorporate their beliefs in their work can better aid survivors if they are able to understand ways in which the gospel speaks to the survivors' experience. The same is true for anyone striving to bear witness to survivors of trauma.

In any examination of trauma narratives, it seems inevitable that one has to start with the inherently difficult task of communicating the trauma experience. There is always a gap between survivor and listener; the listener can hear but not quite grasp the survivor's experience of trauma, most often due to the

fact that it lies so far outside the listener's own realm of experience. Despite this gap, the listener holds tremendous responsibility as the one to hear the survivor's story, witness to the survivor's experience, and respond in a way that at least lets the survivor know that he or she is being heard, "for only when the survivor knows he is being heard, will he stop to hear—and listen to—himself."<sup>2</sup> The questions then become how to respond in a way that lets the survivor know that he or she is being heard, and how to possibly offer some opportunity for healing.

Narrative therapy, which is an established technique of psychotherapy, has many tenets that can be applied to the act of witnessing to another. The narrative therapy approach to treating trauma asserts that the task of the therapist is just that: to let the client tell his or her story, to listen to the client's story, and then to help the client essentially construct a new narrative, one that affirms his or her experience and yet also offers some opportunity for healing or relief.

Storytelling seems a natural part of psychotherapy due to the narrative character of human experience, the fact that many cultures practice storytelling, and the power of stories to convey complex and powerful truths.<sup>3</sup> It is a commonly held belief that there is some relief and freedom in just telling one's story; that sharing a painful experience with another person can lift some of the burden that comes with internalizing it. One should never assume that telling the story is desirable or therapeutic for every client; but many theorists believe that telling the story can help one find meaning in devastating experiences or losses, as well as aid in forming a coherent sense of identity. "When people talk about their lives, they tell stories...it is through stories, furthermore, that



we define who we are. Stories provide us with our identities.”<sup>4</sup> Allowing clients to tell their stories, however haltingly, can affirm a sense of identity and begin the process of externalizing the traumatic event.

The therapeutic task, however, does not end with listening to the client’s story, but instead moves into helping the client construct a new narrative. Trauma is often described as a broken narrative, or a painful gap in the survivor’s life narrative.<sup>5</sup> Therefore it follows that one task of the therapist is to help the survivor build a new and continuous narrative. Narrative reconstruction can be a dangerous task though, as it allows for the possibility of imposing a prescribed narrative onto the survivor’s experience of trauma.

Annie Rogers highlights this danger when she writes that prescribed narratives and standard interpretations “falsify human experience, in two important ways: first, by fragmenting it into static categories, and second, by legislating patterns that become prescriptive.”<sup>6</sup> This falsifying of experience only creates further alienation and meaning loss for the survivor, and risks silencing him or her as well. It is too easy to see the temptation of resorting to a prescribed narrative, both because it shields the listener from the threat to his or her own meaning that the survivor’s narrative presents, and because these standard narratives are so culturally prevalent. It is not surprising that when faced with the completely unfamiliar experience of trauma, one might turn to a more culturally or religiously familiar story to make sense of the survivor’s narrative.

The standard recovery narrative is especially prevalent in American culture. The script of suffering that ultimately leads to growth and redemption is such a familiar and accepted one that

“many Americans reconstruct their past in especially negative ways in order to set up a recovery narrative for themselves.”<sup>7</sup> Americans also have a tendency to reconstruct other’s narratives into a recovery story—an act that can strip meaning from a trauma survivor’s story, rather than reveal it. Certainly the mental health field is not exempt from this tendency, as the standard treatment narrative dictates that after medication and a certain number of therapy sessions one will have achieved a recovery. These narrative viewpoints can be quite problematic for the trauma survivor, whose story often does not fit into any standard recovery narrative.

The arenas of religion and theology are also dangerously full of prescribed narratives and dictated interpretations of events. Christianity holds its own recovery narrative: one of atonement and salvation, and suffering and death that lead to new life. Believers are encouraged to view their own narratives in light of the death and resurrection paradigm, where suffering always leads to redemption or “a deliverance from suffering to a better world.”<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that this narrative does hold possibilities for meaning and hope, and can promote psychological well being. Someone who has experienced trauma, however, may not yet see the possibility of resurrection or may be reluctant to view his or her traumatic experience in any kind of redemptive light.

This inability to fit one’s experience in the familiar religious narrative can be devastating, especially for someone already struggling with alienation and loss of meaning. The devastation can be even more profound if the religious narrative that does not fit is one the survivor has grown up with, or the narrative of his or her religious community. In this sense imposing a standard biblical or theological interpretation on the experience of trauma makes

religion not a source of hope and comfort but instead a source of further loss of meaning. In order for religion or theology to truly act as sources of hope and support for trauma survivors, the traditional narrative may have to be transformed.

The task of the therapist or evangelist then—depending on whether one is using a psychological or theological lens—is not to impose a narrative on the client, but instead to work with him or her to create a narrative transformation, i.e., a new story. One name for this process is re-storying. Rogers writes, “These new narratives are a way of re-storying another’s life by bringing to light or coming to know various alternative stories...Any interpretation, even if it is only a selection of text, is a translation or re-storying of another’s voice.”<sup>9</sup> An alternative story is a story that might foster healing through building meaning and coherence, but also a story that offers an alternative to prescribed narratives. If the survivor has been trying to live out a recovery myth, but finds that this only adds to the frustration and pain, the listener can help in the creation of a more accurate story. This is not meant to devalue the survivor’s story, or name it as somehow wrong or insufficient—a process that would be as damaging as imposing a standard narrative. The task instead is to help a survivor find a story that might aid in piecing together the shattered sense of meaning: “some individuals may have to create a different story in order to find meaning once again. This is the goal of narrative therapy following loss.”<sup>10</sup> Though it is the task of the listener to help the survivor create a new story and a new possibility for meaning, the listener must always work with a narrative that has already been presented by the survivor, and empower the survivor to act as a co-creator of this new story.

Narrative therapy views the client's life as a text that is continually unfolding. The therapist then, can be seen as a "re-visionary editor" who works with the client "much as an editor and author might, toward the goal of producing a story that is acceptable to the author."<sup>11</sup> The therapist is constantly interpreting and re-visioning the text until a new story has been created. The creation process can also allow for the client to envision a future self, a task that trauma can make difficult. Sewell and Williams have observed that, "Often traumatized clients have no clear sense of the future."<sup>12</sup> Narrative therapists can help the client create a narrative that stretches into the future. Rather than having a prescribed end, the story must remain flexible enough for the client to imagine various possible future selves, as being able to imagine multiple scenarios for the future aids recovery. In this sense the re-visioned narrative is often open ended, suggesting that, despite the devastation of the trauma experience, the client's story is not over, and the future still holds possibilities.

A significant part of the re-visioning process is searching out the hidden text that has been suppressed, often in reaction to others not wanting to listen to these painful, even devastating part of the client's story. Bringing this hidden text to life can allow the client to tell a story that may feel more meaningful or true. In this sense the listener is aiding the survivor in creating a new story by allowing hidden or buried parts of the original story to emerge. Perhaps the most important part of the re-visioning process is freeing the survivor from imposed narratives. Doan and Parry assert, "At this point the individuals can resume the writing and living of their own stories and abdicate from those stories into which they were born and which have defined them and lived

them.”<sup>13</sup> There is power in simply letting the survivor live into his or her own story, and though trauma narratives are certainly stories of pain, there may be new possibilities for healing that open up once the survivor realizes that his or her story can veer off the traditional path of recovery and redemption and yet remain meaningful.

One method of “re-storying” is using a theologically informed re-visioning process and interweaving the survivor’s story with a biblical narrative that goes beyond the traditional narrative of death leading to resurrection. To move theology into the realm of narrative transformation brings it a new task. As Hoffman writes, “Theology must examine its relationship to experiencing and fostering transforming narrative.”<sup>14</sup> As someone who has studied both theology and social work, I have worked to bring theology into my interactions with clients, and believe that it can aid in creating stories that are transformative and disruptive to patterns of despair and loss of meaning. Biblical narratives can be useful tools for using theology to transform narrative.

Lee claims that “biblical narratives help readers to imagine new possibilities...This includes the ability to situate one’s own life in a transcendent narrative context.”<sup>15</sup> Situating one’s own life in a transcendent narrative can aid in creating meaning, and creating meaning, as well as imagining new possibilities are both critical tasks for the trauma survivor in recovery. Transcendence and imagination allow for the transformation of the trauma experience.

Using biblical narratives in this way also demands imagination and creativity from the listener, whether the listener is a social service provider, pastoral counselor, minister, or volunteer. Traumatic experiences can themselves feel beyond the imagination

of the listener, so an effective response also requires imagination. Additionally, this type of creativity requires the mixing of different types of language, namely religious language and colloquial language, a process that can be helpful in and of itself. As Winkelmann writes, “Storytelling is a useful activity because it allows for the mixing of various types of language...that may assist in the healing process.”<sup>16</sup> It has been my experience, in listening to both clients I have worked with and survivors of Hurricane Katrina, that mixing religious—especially scriptural—and colloquial language is quite common, particularly in communities where religion and the institution of the church play a central role.

So while it is true that many survivors may benefit from an application of Gospel narratives to their own stories, especially given the fact that many Hurricane Katrina survivors come from the African-American community where church plays a central role, the call for creativity and caution is critical because the experiences of Hurricane Katrina survivors likely do not fall into a clean suffering-to-redemption continuum. Nor do survivors necessarily want their suffering to be glorified through a comparison to the biblical narrative of suffering and resurrection.

An important part of evangelism is not only spreading the gospel to others but also allowing others to find themselves in the Gospel narratives and to develop a theological context for the stories of their own lives. This task is especially critical when working with survivors of trauma, as aiding survivors in finding their own story within a theological narrative may not only connect or re-connect them to the faith, but also allow them a source of comfort and meaning. In this way even those who exist outside the category of traditional evangelists, such as social service providers,

can, if they think it would be beneficial for the client, utilize the Gospel narratives as a mode of intervention.

In whatever context one is attempting to witness to trauma survivors, especially survivors of a trauma as complex and insidious as Hurricane Katrina, it is vitally important to remember that not all will be able to identify with the traditional narrative of Christ's suffering and death leading to resurrection, and some will even be hurt or alienated by an attempt to fit their unspeakable experience into such a pre-formed narrative. Rather, such a task of witnessing calls for creativity, imagination, and a rereading of the Gospels themselves in order to find the ways to re-vision another's story. The Gospels hold this special power to connect evangelism, narrative therapy, theology and to envision new possibilities for those who have lost hope.

---

<sup>1</sup> This article stems from various sources: my academic work in theology and trauma with Dr. Shelly Rambo at Boston University; a corresponding academic interest in narrative theory and narrative theology; my experience doing clinical social work with adults, children, and families in a community mental health setting; and the development of a workshop on theology and trauma with Cat Dodson and Kathryn House for the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education.

<sup>2</sup> Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, eds. Shoshona Felman and Dori Laub (New York: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall, Inc., 1992), 71.

<sup>3</sup> John C. Hoffman, *Law, Freedom, and Story: The Role of Narrative in Therapy, Society, and Faith* (Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 68-69.

<sup>4</sup> Dan P. McAdams, *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By* (Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 2006), 13.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth W. Sewell and Amy M. Williams, "Broken Narratives: Trauma, Metaconstructive Gaps, and the Audience of Psychotherapy," *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 15 (2002), 207.

<sup>6</sup> Annie Rogers. "Alphabets of the Night" *Radcliffe Quarterly* (Winter 2001), 22.

<sup>7</sup> McAdams, *The Redemption Self*, 251.

<sup>8</sup> McAdams, *The Redemption Self* 7.

<sup>9</sup> Rogers, "Alphabets of the Night," 22.

<sup>10</sup> Bronna D. Romanoff, "Research as Therapy: The Power of Narrative to Effect Change," in *Meaning Reconstruction and the Experience of Loss*, ed. Robert Neimeyer (Washington DC: The American Psychological Association, 2001), 247.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Doan and Alan Parry, "The Therapist and Reflecting Team as Re-Visionary Editors," in *Story Re-Visions: Narrative Therapy in the Postmodern World*, eds. Robert Doan and Alan Perry. (New York: The Guilford Press, 1994), 120.

<sup>12</sup> Sewell and Williams, "Broken Narratives," 216.

<sup>13</sup> Doan and Parry, "The Therapist and Reflecting Team," 40.

<sup>14</sup> Hoffman, *Law, Freedom, and Story*, 153.

<sup>15</sup> Cameron Lee, "Agency and Purpose in Narrative Therapy: Questioning the Postmodern Rejection of Metanarrative," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 32, no. 3 (2004), 229.

<sup>16</sup> Carol L. Winkelmann, "The Language of Healing: Generic Structure, Hybridization and Meaning Shifts in the Recovery of Battered Women," in *Survivor Rhetoric: Negotiations and Narrativity in Abused Women's Language*, eds. Christine Shearer-Creman and Carol L. Winkelmann (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 211.



# Toward a Transformational Education:

## A Past-to-Future Look at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies

*Al Tizon*

The twenty-fifth anniversary of OCMS occasions meaningful reflection upon the holistic missionary movement, i.e., an honest look back in order to forge ahead with confidence and resolve.

In *Transforming Mission*, the late David J. Bosch wrote that “there is no such thing as missiology, *period*. There is only missiology in draft.”<sup>1</sup> Ironically, his book has been hailed as the definitive work on missiology. If he were still alive, he would have likely resisted such a notion, yes, because from the testimonies of those who knew him, he was a humble man, but also because he understood the study of mission as theological reflection “in the midst” and “on-the-go.” It is ever-changing, not so much in

**Al Tizon** is Assistant Professor of Holistic Ministry at Palmer Theological Seminary and Director of Word & Deed Network, a ministry of Evangelicals for Social Action, both in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania (USA).

substance (for the gospel will always be the gospel) as in formulation, because of the ever changing times and the ever-new challenges posed by every generation.

Theological institutions that have embraced this truth have proven their enduring worth because they have tended to remain culturally sensitive and socially relevant. The Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS) in the U.K. has striven to be this kind of institution for the last quarter of a century; and as it turns twenty-five, it is appropriate to throw it a party. The twenty-five year mark also occasions meaningful reflection upon the holistic missionary movement, i.e., an honest look back in order to forge ahead with confidence and resolve.

In one way, I am an outsider to the OCMS community, as I have played no official leadership role in any ministries related to the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians (INFEMIT), which gave birth to OCMS. But in another way, I am also an insider, as one who has taken part in the unfolding of the global holistic missionary movement, of which INFEMIT/OCMS as a unity has played an important pioneering role. As a Filipino-American evangelical community organizer-pastor in the Philippines in the late 1980s and 1990s, I considered myself a participant in the holistic missionary movement and therefore a part of INFEMIT/OCMS.<sup>2</sup> I also became a serious student of the movement as I made it the focus of my doctoral studies between 1998 and 2005.<sup>3</sup> And now as a missiologist who teaches in the United States at a seminary known for its commitment to the whole gospel for the whole world, as well as the director of a ministry called Word & Deed Network that helps local congregations engage their communities holistically, I continue to

consider myself a member of the OCMS family, whether it reciprocates and considers me a family member or not! As an insider/outsider then, I offer these past-to-future reflections on OCMS.

### **Historical Context**

The 1960s proved to be a decade of fundamental shifts in politics, culture, and morality around the world. While some would describe the '60s as tumultuous, chaotic and even anarchic, others would depict that period as ushering in a new era of freedom and opportunity. The global church certainly did not escape being affected by these shifts, as it found itself amidst intense rethinking concerning the nature and practice of mission. Liberation movements, particularly among Roman Catholics in Latin America, began to flourish, profoundly challenging the church worldwide to champion the poor as a core activity of mission. Furthermore, and not at all unrelated to the rise of liberation theology, church leaders of the Two Thirds World began to assert themselves as they increasingly exercised their kingdom right in shaping theology, ethics, and mission, and thus ushering in an unprecedented commitment to contextualization.

In Protestant circles, the ferment of the 1960s created the atmosphere for the intensification of the debate between ecumenicals and evangelicals over mission. When evangelicals held two of its own global conferences on evangelism in 1966—one in Wheaton, IL and the other in Berlin—they did so as an affront to the World Council of Churches, which to them was woefully downplaying the importance of evangelism.<sup>4</sup> And when ecumenicals gathered for the fourth assembly of the WCC in Uppsala in 1968 and drafted the Uppsala Report, which clearly

defined the priority for mission as participating “in the struggle for a just society,” they also did so fully knowing how this would further distance them from the evangelical community.<sup>5</sup>

### **Emerging Mission as Transformation**

In this contentious context, another breed of mission theologian began to develop, a breed that I describe elsewhere as “radical evangelical.”<sup>6</sup> These radical evangelical theologians and practitioners took seriously the revolutionary call upon the church to change society for the sake of the poor, but who refused to abandon evangelism as part of their interpretation of the historic, orthodox, Christian mission. They saw the gospel as demanding both evangelism and social concern in order, not only to be relevant in contexts of poverty, violence and oppression, but more fundamentally, to be faithful to the very nature of the gospel itself.

Significant markers of this growing movement at the hands of radical evangelicals include the historic meeting in Chicago in 1973 of a select group of American evangelicals who joined their sisters and brothers in the Two Thirds World in calling the church to commit to social justice alongside evangelism as part of its mission.<sup>7</sup> This paved the way for a more significant marker—namely, the First International Congress on World Evangelization held in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1974. The Lausanne Covenant, the official statement of the watershed gathering, included social responsibility as one of its fifteen definitive affirmations.<sup>8</sup>

While radical evangelicals applauded the inclusion of social responsibility in the Covenant, they also made it clear that they wanted it to be expressed more forcefully. Forming as an ad hoc group at the Lausanne Congress, they drafted a statement on “Theology [and] Implications of Radical Discipleship” and

presented it to the delegates both as a complement and a corrective to the Covenant.<sup>9</sup> It called for an even deeper commitment to social justice around the world, as it attempted to integrate works of compassion and justice into the task of world evangelization. The fact that over a third of the participants signed the statement and the fact that it was included along with the rest of the official Congress documents testified to the impact of the radical element upon the evangelical missionary community.

However, if the radicals at Lausanne '74 hoped for more unity on the role that social responsibility played in God's mission, then they were likely blindsided by the intense debates that ensued in the decade after the Congress. Among the gatherings in which these debates intensified include the Consultation on World Evangelization in 1980 in Pattaya, Thailand (COWE) and the Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility in 1982 in Grand Rapids, Michigan (CRESR). While these gatherings resulted in varying levels of consensus, the fundamental differences between the various schools of thought within evangelicalism concerning the place of social concern in the mission of the church also became more prominent.

It was at a definitive consultation in Wheaton in 1983 under the theme, "I Will Build My Church," where radical evangelicals clearly articulated their understanding of mission. At this consultation, they adopted the word "transformation" as one that succinctly and powerfully captured the vision of the movement, which had been growing and developing in earnest since Lausanne '74. And transformationists have shaped and reshaped the meaning of the word for mission ever since. Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden offered the following definition in 1999: "Transformation is to

enable God's vision of society to be actualized in all relationships, social, economic and spiritual, so that God's will be reflected in human society and his love be experienced by all communities, especially the poor."<sup>10</sup> Ever since the holistic missionary movement took on the name Transformation, its proponents have steadily advanced their agenda throughout the world: urging churches, ministries, and missionaries to refuse to understand evangelization without liberation, church planting without community building, a change of heart without a change of social structures, and vertical reconciliation (between God and people) without horizontal reconciliation (between people and people).

### **Kingdom Building Blocks: Integration, Incarnation, and Justice for the Poor**

Transformationists have based their holistic understanding of mission upon the biblical reality of the reign or kingdom of God. There are at least three founding features of this missiology in light of the biblical kingdom. The first is its kingdom commitment to genuine integration, particularly between evangelism and social concern, which has led to ministering to the whole person—spiritual, psychological, physical, relational, economic, social and political—by the power of the whole gospel. Second is its kingdom commitment to genuine contextualization; i.e., local cultural expressions of the faith, as transformationists looked to the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ as the model for ministry in the world. According to Samuel, these two kingdom commitments—integration and incarnation—reflected the maturing of mission. He writes, “Contextualization [incarnation] and wholistic mission [integration] are the success of the mission of the last thirty years [referring back to Lausanne ‘74] . . . in getting involved and

reshaping the whole of life—this is the real development in mission.”<sup>11</sup>

A kingdom commitment to genuine justice for the poor, which underlies the other two commitments, makes up the third founding feature of Mission as Transformation. After all, the original sub-title of the Wheaton ’83 Statement on Transformation was “The Church in Response to Human Need.” Indeed, how to be faithful to the gospel among the poor—kingdom justice—was the inspiration behind both kingdom integration and kingdom incarnation.

### **Toward Transformational Mission as Education**

How is such a movement of kingdom integration, incarnation and justice to be developed, sustained, and advanced? The establishment of OCMS in 1983 attests not only that this question existed in the minds of the movement’s early proponents, but it also points to one of their primary answers to the question—namely, by high quality theological education.

The transformational movement has always been, at the core, a theological endeavor that involved deep reflection in the service of responsible mission in the world. Pressing missiological issues undoubtedly evoked the questions that shaped Mission as Transformation; but believing that mission finds its vitality and longevity in well-grounded theology, transformationists have always held up the importance of doing theology—and doing it well, lest “theology [take] a backseat to strategic initiatives.”<sup>12</sup> They knew that solid, research-based, graduate-level, theological education was a key to the success of the movement.

Enter: OCMS, which has sought to provide a viable avenue for quality graduate theological education for the past twenty five

years, primarily in the service of the church in the Two Thirds World.<sup>13</sup> In order to accomplish such a feat, OCMS leadership had to think outside the box, because Western structures of higher education have not been historically friendly to those from the Two Thirds World who wish to study in their institutions. This is true across the academic spectrum in the West, and theological education is no exception. The “unwelcome mat” for those from the Two Thirds World is laid down in a variety of ways.

First, the obvious: the astronomical cost of graduate education. In the United States, for example, “. . . it costs between \$75,000 and \$100,000 to educate a student through a three-year M.Div. program.”<sup>14</sup> For Ph.D. programs in theology, costs vary, but they range from \$17,000 to \$30,000 per year.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Western seminaries and graduate schools are bound by federal law to require international students to supply proof of sufficient funding for the next three or four years, a stipulation that even many domestic students would be unable to meet. Indeed the cost of theological education prohibits many if not most ministry leaders from the Two Thirds World from studying in the West.

A second type of “unwelcome mat” is the institutional structures and procedures; that is, the Western bureaucratic machinery as well as Westernized instruction, exams and grades given by Western faculty. Moreover, teaching is done not just in English, but in sophisticated academic English, making communication a major problem between the institution and international students. This is not to make Western institutions feel guilty; Westerners, after all, should have the right to be Western! But by their very nature, such structures and procedures make it extremely difficult for non-Westerners, as they spend much



of their time just trying to understand the system (and fighting off culture shock) rather than contributing creatively to the theological conversation.

And a third type of “unwelcome mat” has to do with content. It is a fact that the theological enterprise has been dominated by the West since Constantine, or at least since the East-West Schism of 1054. As a result, the Western church has set the standard for systematics, church history, ethics, ecclesiology, ministry practice, etc., i.e., what gets taught in seminaries and graduate schools around the world. In order to be considered theologically educated, students have had to go through Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Aquinas, Wesley, Barth, and a few others, as these represent significant periods in the history and theology of the church. There is certainly nothing wrong with gaining knowledge of these church greats; but how does it feel from a Two Thirds World students’ perspective to learn of these people as the central figures in theology, while the church heroes of their own contexts are relegated to the fringe supporting cast, if they are even mentioned at all?

For example, in the Philippines, should not Bishop Domingo de Salazar, defender of the native peoples against their maltreatment at the hands of Spanish colonizers, Gregorio Aglipay and Isabelo de los Reyes, resisters of both Spain and America to form the Philippine Independent Church, and Nicholas Zamora, founder of the first national Protestant church, be the central figures, and those who fall within the Augustinian-Barthian continuum be considered the supporting cast for Filipino students of church history? This is a rhetorical question.

OCMS has tried hard to address these obstacles. By keeping costs down, developing a field-based, mentor-based program, and establishing partnerships with other academic institutions around the world, OCMS has valiantly attempted to provide accredited theological education primarily for leaders and scholars from the non-Western world, while keeping fresh, creative, holistic, and contextually relevant theology at the center of missiological reflection. OCMS' self-description says in part, "In its 25 years of ministry, we have brought . . . topics [such as poverty alleviation, social conflict, corruption, community development, the media, education, HIV/AIDS, etc.] into mission thinking with academic credibility and spiritual sensitivity, through post-graduate and post-doctoral research."<sup>16</sup>

### **How Did It Do? Looking Back on the First 25 Years**

This brief look at the place that OCMS intended to occupy within the movement begs the question, "How did it do in its first twenty five years?" First, the facts: more than eighty scholars have graduated from OCMS with Ph.D. degrees and many more with Masters degrees as well as with certificates in community development, ethics, theology, and communication. At the time of this writing, there are one hundred students currently enrolled and the numbers increase steadily at approximately 20% per year. While these numbers may not stagger the minds of institutional growth strategists, they do indicate a promising trajectory of numerical increase.

More importantly than surface numbers, however, is to consider the quality of the results of the program. "Sixty-six percent of graduates are involved in theological education and mission training for the church or para-church organizations, 13%

in evangelism, 11% in Christian relief and development work, and 10% in senior church leadership.”<sup>17</sup> The fact that virtually 100% of OCMS graduates are involved in work that directly relates to their respective areas of study should stand out in any assessment of an educational institution. Furthermore, the percentage breakdown of the intercontinental body of OCMS alumni and current students consists of 31% from Africa, 29% from Asia, 22% from Europe, 12% from North America, and 6% from South America.<sup>18</sup> These more qualitative numbers demonstrate an effective educational ministry for a growing number of leaders from around the world, an education that is duly recognized by the body that validates institutions of higher learning in the UK.

What enliven the facts, however, are the testimonies, ministries, and accomplishments of OCMS alumni and current students. In *OCMS: My Story*, eighteen alumni and current research students share their life- and ministry-transforming educational experiences at OCMS.<sup>19</sup> From bishops to professors to mission executives to those involved in media, OCMS alumni (as well as current students) occupy important posts and have accomplished much. Doug Petersen (PhD 1995), distinguished professor of missiology at Vanguard University in California, USA, was instrumental in making Latin America Child Care (LACC) the largest integrated network of evangelical schools in Latin America and the Caribbean. LACC is a ministry of the Assemblies of God that cares for and educates children in over twenty one countries in Latin America. Sister Mary Rita Rozario (MPhil 1997) has been an authoritative voice in India and beyond in the area of sex-trafficking. Joseph Suico (PhD 2003), professor of ministry, church & society, and contextual theology at Asia Pacific Theological

Seminary in Baguio City, Philippines, serves as the general secretary of the Philippine General Council of the Assemblies of God. Dario Lopez Rodriguez (PhD 1997) pastors a church in Peru that ministers holistically to the poor, especially to children through meals and education. He also engages in advocacy work, mobilizing the grassroots for structural change on the socio-political level. Corneliu Constantineanu (PhD 2006) serves as associate professor and academic dean at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek, Croatia. Catherine Nyameino (MA 2002 and current PhD student) was recently appointed as director of the Radio and Television Division of the Adventist World Radio. These are but a sampling of OCMS alumni who have obviously appropriated their theological studies into their respective vocations to make a kingdom difference in their contexts.

The only criticisms leveled against OCMS that I have ever heard had more to do with the difficulty of getting used to the British educational system than with OCMS itself. One American enrolled in the program, for example, could not understand why he did not have to take any courses. One Filipino complained that he often felt lost administratively; if he wanted to know where he stood on the journey toward his degree, he had to be in constant communication with OCMS staff, and even then, it never felt totally clear. Besides these things, the testimonies of the educational experience at OCMS and the vital ministries that are happening throughout the world at the hands of its alumni demonstrate remarkable success in its first twenty five years in having accomplished what it originally set out to do, namely, to

provide quality graduate theological education in holistic mission primarily for the sake of the church in the Two Thirds World.

### **To the Future: Looking Ahead to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

So what about the next twenty five years as we look ahead to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the year 2033? If the Transformational movement desires to remain on the cutting edge of God's missionary activity in the world, it will need to pay close attention to a number of current developments, which have significant missiological implications. I contend that the trajectory that OCMS has created in its first twenty five years prepares the next generation of mission theologians and practitioners to respond effectively to these developments. So the first thing that present and future OCMS leaders need to do is simply to be faithful to the original vision that gave birth to the post-Lausanne holistic missionary movement that took on the name "Transformation." In koine English, "Just keep on keepin' on!" Building then on that which has already been laid, forward-looking evangelicals or transformationists need to pay special attention at least to the following five developments.

#### *Word, Work, Wonder and World: Creation Care and Holistic Ministry*

First, creation care has increasingly become a frontline issue for evangelicals. It is unusual that evangelicals are on the forefront of any issue, but in the case of the environment at this particular time in history, secular media, environmentalists, and eco-justice activists are looking to organizations like the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) and even the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in the United States for insight and guidance. For example, Richard Cizik, former Vice President of

Governmental Affairs for the NAE, has been sought out for the last several years to speak on environmental issues in general and global warming in particular, as he has been featured on National Public Radio and television shows such as Bill Moyers' Journal and CNN.

Transformationists need to pay close attention to this issue, as they continue to discover new dimensions of what holistic ministry encompasses. Apparently, integrating evangelism and social concern was but the tip of the iceberg in understanding the holistic kingdom vision. For example, when Pentecostals and Charismatics joined the holistic ministry conversation, they emphasized the power of the Holy Spirit for mission. And as a result, "word and deed" expanded for many to "word, deed, and sign."<sup>20</sup> In the same way, evangelicals need to reflect deeply upon the kingdom connection between holistic ministry and creation care.

Not that this connection has been completely ignored; indeed, one can even argue that creation care has always been on the transformational radar screen. But there is deeper work to be done. As creation care has rightfully become a frontline issue for evangelicals, transformationists need to do the important work of grounding it into kingdom theology, discipleship and spirituality. In other words, they need to incorporate concern for the environment into holistic biblical thinking, and to expand "word, deed, and sign" perhaps to "word, deed, sign, and stewardship," or if one wishes, "word, work, wonder, and world."

*Mission from Christianity's New Center—the Two Thirds World*

Second, the realization that the center of Christianity has shifted from the North and West to the South and East describes another relatively recent development that has massive

missiological implications. This development has been monitored for the last three or four decades, but it has been popularized most recently by the writings of Philip Jenkins, history and religious studies professor at Penn State University in Pennsylvania, USA. Jenkins' book *The Next Christendom* obviously went public at the right time, as both academy and church seemed finally poised to accept statements such as, "The era of Western Christianity has passed within our lifetimes, and the day of Southern Christianity is dawning" and "If we want to visualize a 'typical' contemporary Christian, we should think of a woman living in a village in Nigeria or in a Brazilian favela."<sup>21</sup>

Missiologically speaking, this has meant a renewed commitment to the development of local theologies and the reshaping of the church according to non-Western categories. Andrew Walls writes, "The majority of the Christians now belong to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These regions will increasingly be the places where Christian decisions and Christian choices will have to be made, where creative theology will become a necessity . . . ."<sup>22</sup>

Christianity's new center has also meant the dependence upon sisters and brothers from the Two Thirds World to be the ones primarily to carry out the *missio Dei* in the future. Regarding the latter, missiologist Larry Pate wrote in 1989 that "... a large part of the future of missions belongs to the missionaries of Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania."<sup>23</sup> The now twenty-year-old statistics that Pate used to back up such an assertion have only proven truer today.

The transformational movement is ahead of the curve in this regard as theological and ecclesial realities in the Two Thirds World

served as one of the key motivators that gave birth to OCMS. Mark Lau Branson's and C. Rene Padilla's *Conflict and Context*, the late Kwame Bediako's *Theology and Identity*, and Hwa Yung's *Mangoes and Bananas* exemplify the transformational commitment to the importance of local culture in theology and mission.<sup>24</sup>

Transformationists need to build upon this foundation of contextual theology and develop a radical evangelical version of global mission-sending that flows out of the new center of Christianity. As nations in the Two Thirds World increasingly send missionaries throughout the world, they will need to be equipped to do so with a holistic, contextual vision, the kind that has advanced at the hands of transformationists for the last twenty five years.

### *Glocal Theology*

Third, although space will not allow for a fuller discussion of the phenomenon of globalization, a list of contemporary issues that have implications for mission certainly cannot exclude it; for indeed the age of globalization is upon us. Sociologist David Held and his colleagues provide a general definition of globalization as a "... widening, deepening and speeding up of global interconnectedness," which has an all encompassing impact upon the world.<sup>25</sup> In the age of globalization—where both a market-based global culture (McWorld) and the proliferation of anti-globalization local cultures (Jihad)—co-exist nervously, scholars of all disciplines have been compelled to deal seriously with the global-local relationship.<sup>26</sup>

Missiology is no exception, as our increasingly interconnected, interdependent world calls for an understanding of the mission of the church in terms of the global and the local. It



calls for the development of “glocal” theology, i.e., an understanding of God, gospel, church, and mission that negotiates global and local realities. Unlike typical globalization discussions, which pit local and global realities against each other, mission theologians need to be more creative and dialectic, understanding the relationship between global/universal and local/particular notions not as polar opposites but as necessary complements.

Transformationists have through the years championed local, cultural theologizing, but without doing away with a transcultural God and universally applicable truths concerning God. In other words, they have maintained a responsible global theology amidst the strong winds of postmodernism and postcolonialism that blow against it. In this light, transformationists seem well poised to avoid both “globalism” (where a meta-narrative of God is imposed upon all cultures) and “localism” (where local renderings of the faith fail to inform any kind of global understanding). They are in a position to develop a glocal theology of mission that will help the church to address the issues of our globalizing world more effectively as well as challenge the detrimental forces of ideological globalization. To draw out the complexities of a glocal theology is an essential task for transformationists for the next twenty five years and beyond.

*The Ephesian Moment (with a Nod to Andrew Walls)*

Fourth, and not at all unrelated to globalization, the diverse peoples of the world find themselves next to each other living in the same neighborhoods, shopping in the same marketplaces, eating in the same restaurants, and enrolling their children in the same schools. In light of this reality, the Christian community is undeniably living in an “Ephesian moment.” Coined by Andrew

Walls, “the Ephesian moment” refers to a time when at least two cultures come together to experience Christ and to form the multi-ethnic body of Christ such as what happened in ancient Ephesus.<sup>27</sup> “. . . In our own day,” writes Walls, “the Ephesian moment has come again, and come in a richer mode than has ever happened since the first century.”<sup>28</sup> And again, “The Ephesian moment . . . brings a church more culturally diverse than it has ever been before.”<sup>29</sup> Not just two cultures, but many cultures are coming together to comprise the world church today, increasingly resembling the eschatological picture of every tribe and nation worshipping the one God in Revelation 7. Indeed the church has the unprecedented opportunity to come together to form the cultural mosaic that the gospel has always called for.

However, just because the moment is here does not automatically make for a culturally diverse church. There is a sector of God’s people that may still suffer from a misappropriation of the homogenous unit principle (HUP) and therefore operate under the notion that the best way to evangelize the world is through evangelists going to their own respective cultures with the gospel, and thus planting and establishing monocultural churches. Most transformationists have been suspicious of the HUP, precisely because it carries with it the tendency to undermine the multicultural nature of the biblical gospel. At best, they see the HUP as penultimate, i.e., as a logical, practical truth that the communication of the gospel happens best when it occurs between people belonging to the same culture.

But church and mission cannot stop there. The ultimate goal must be to reflect what is coming—namely, the coming together of the diverse cultures of the world, healing divisions that have caused

alienation, misunderstanding, pain and suffering between peoples, to come reconciled together in Christ to the eschatological banquet to worship their common Creator, Savior, and Lord. Because of this conviction, there is every reason to believe that transformationists will seize the Ephesian moment and make the best of it. OCMS will need to build upon its sturdy commitment to contextual theology with a strong emphasis upon the development of an intercontextual theology if it wants to move effectively into the future.

The transformational commitment to contextuality should remain strong, but it needs to shift its energies from affirming culturally-specific expressions of gospel and church to bringing together diverse peoples to reflect the intercontextual nature of the body of Christ. This shift cannot be an abandonment of contextual theology, but rather a way to bring contextual theologies together for the sake of completing the Body. Walls says it succinctly when he writes, “The Ephesian [way] shows each of the culture-specific segments as necessary to the body but as incomplete in itself.”<sup>30</sup> To the extent that the transformational movement develops an intercontextual theology, taking advantage of the Ephesian moment, the next twenty five years will bear much fruit.

#### *Non-Traditional, Global, Theological Education*

Lastly (though there are undoubtedly other issues), mission theologians have increasingly questioned the effectiveness of traditional approaches to theological education, and by doing so, they have set in motion non-traditional ways of training Christian leaders. Bernhard Ott’s doctoral work demonstrates this new direction. While acknowledging the three main influences of Bible school, university and seminary that have informed (and continue

to inform) theological education, Ott calls the academy to move beyond these by finding a secure primary place for mission in the curriculum as well as developing creative ways of delivery.<sup>31</sup> As the foundations of the Enlightenment worldview increasingly weaken and crack (some say they have already crumbled), traditional theological education, which has relied upon these foundations, has become more and more inadequate. For example, not a few missiologists, including Mykelbust, Newbigin, Bosch, Ott and others, have pointed out the unbiblical separation of academic theological inquiry and mission; for theology has no life apart from mission and vice versa. Unfortunately, many theological institutions have ignored this truth, and consequently, they either relegate missiology to the exotic or eliminate it altogether from the curriculum. This flies against the face of the truth that “mission is the mother of theology.”<sup>32</sup>

OCMS, the theological keeper of the transformational movement since 1983, has been on the cutting edge of experimenting with non-traditional theological education on both fronts of the mission/theology integration and of its creative delivery. Regarding the integration of mission and theology, this constitutes the very DNA of OCMS; so by its very existence, it challenges the Enlightenment-ridden paradigm that erroneously separates theory and practice.

As to its delivery, OCMS leaders have sought to create a field-based graduate program that relies on academic partners around the world, while basing its operations in the UK. The program requires only minimal residency in Oxford (six weeks a year after an initial three months), but maximal involvement with approved mentors from the students’ respective countries. This field-based,

mentor-based, partnership-dependent delivery system has challenged traditional structures to be self-critical and to consider changing fundamental approaches to theological education in order to meet the needs of a changing world.

In order for OCMS to remain cutting edge in this area, it needs first simply to resume keeping mission and theology integrally intact and to continue its creative thinking regarding delivery, particularly by the development of its global partnerships. If there is a place for growth, it seems to be here. Much energy needs to be expended in strengthening existing partnerships and forming new partnerships with academic institutions around the world. Imagine what would happen if OCMS becomes the M.A. and Ph.D. programs for the many seminaries and Christian universities around the globe. These traditional schools would begin to recover the mission-theology connection and train their students accordingly. Moreover, a truly intercultural, global theological education would grow and flourish. As Samuel celebrates, “This is one of the strengths of OCMS—it is international scholarship, not just local scholarship.”<sup>33</sup> This can be said of theological education in general if schools that “get it,” such as OCMS, would establish strong partnerships with other theological educational institutions around the world.

Special focus on at least these five current missiological issues —1) holistic mission with a renewed emphasis upon creation care, 2) mission from Christianity’s new center, 3) the development of a glocal theology, 4) the development of an intercontextual theology, and 5) the ongoing formation of non-traditional theological education—will occasion a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the year 2033, a celebratory time when the future family of OCMS and the

transformational movement can thank God for advancing the holistic, contextual vision of the gospel for all, especially the poor.

*This article is an adaptation of a chapter in a forthcoming volume in honor of the 25th Anniversary of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies to be published by Regnum Books International. It is printed here by kind permission of the publisher.*

---

<sup>1</sup> David J. Bosch. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 498.

<sup>2</sup> I was in the Philippines from 1989 to 1998 under the auspices of a small, U.S.-based mission agency called Action International Ministries through which I helped to establish a Filipino Christian community development organization, LIGHT Ministries.

<sup>3</sup> My dissertation has evolved into book form, entitled *Transformation After Lausanne: Radical Evangelical Mission in Global-Local Perspective*. (Regnum Books, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Roger Hedlund. *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission*. (Bangalore, India: Theological Book Trust, 1997), 156-163.

<sup>5</sup> Hedlund, *Roots*, 223-232.

<sup>6</sup> See Tizon, *Transformation after Lausanne*, 3-4, for a more detailed definition.

<sup>7</sup> "The Chicago Declaration," in *The Chicago Declaration*, ed. Ronald J. Sider (Carol Stream, Illinois: Creation House, 1974), 1-2. In this same volume, some of the original signers of the Declaration, including Samuel Escobar, Nancy Hardesty and Jim Wallis, offer their reflections.

<sup>8</sup> "The Lausanne Covenant," *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. James D. Douglas (Minneapolis, Minnesota: World Wide Publications, 1975), 3-10.

<sup>9</sup> "Theology [and] Implications of Radical Discipleship," *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, 1294-1296.

<sup>10</sup> Chris Sugden, "Transformational Development: Current State of Understanding and Practice," *Transformation* 20, no. 2 (April 2003), 71.

<sup>11</sup> Vinay Samuel, cited in Chris Sugden, *Gospel, Culture and Transformation*. (Oxford et al.: Regnum, 2000), 20.

<sup>12</sup> Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, *Mission as Transformation*. (Oxford et al.: Regnum, 1999), xi.

<sup>13</sup> INFEMIT and OCMS as separate institutions are currently redefining their relationship, but I continue in this paper to keep them together as sustaining symbols of Mission as Transformation.

<sup>14</sup> Dan Aleshire cited in John Dart, "The Value of Theological Education: Is It Worth It?" *Christian Century* (22 February 2003), 33-34.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Goodacre, "PhD: UK or USA?" *New Testament Gateway Weblog*, <http://www.ntgateway.com/weblog/2007/04/phd-uk-or-usa.html> (accessed 12 May 2008).

<sup>16</sup> "OCMS," [www.ocms.ac.uk/pdf/OCMS8-opt.pdf](http://www.ocms.ac.uk/pdf/OCMS8-opt.pdf) (accessed 5 May 2008).

<sup>17</sup> "OCMS," [www.ocms.ac.uk/pdf/OCMS8-opt.pdf](http://www.ocms.ac.uk/pdf/OCMS8-opt.pdf) (accessed 5 May 2008).

<sup>18</sup> "OCMS," [www.ocms.ac.uk/pdf/OCMS8-opt.pdf](http://www.ocms.ac.uk/pdf/OCMS8-opt.pdf) (accessed 5 May 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Bernard Farr, Mele'ana Puloka and Danuta Wisniewska, eds. *OCMS: My Story* (Oxford: OCMS, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> Peter Kuzmic, "Pentecostals Respond to Marxism," in *Called & Empowered*, eds. Murray A. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 160.

<sup>21</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*. (Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2-3. Others have been saying the same thing for years, such as Walter Buhlmann, *The Coming of the Third Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976), Edward Norman, *Christianity and the World Order* (Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 1979), Andrew Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Marknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001) and Dana L. Robert, "Shifting Southward," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24.2 (April 2000), 50-58.

<sup>22</sup> Walls, *Cross Cultural Process*, 80-81.

<sup>23</sup> Larry D. Pate, *From Every People* (Monrovia: MARC, 1989), 5.

<sup>24</sup> Mark Lau Branson and C. Rene Padilla, *Conflice and Context*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986); Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity* (Oxford: Regnum, 1992); Hwa Yung, *Mangoes and Bananas* (Oxford et al.: Regnum, 2002).

<sup>25</sup> David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformaitons* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 14-15.

<sup>26</sup> The use of "Jihad" and "McWorld" for the globalization discussion was first popularized by political scientist Benjamin Barber in *Jihad Vs. McWorld* (New York: Ballantine, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> Walls, *Cross Cultural Process*, 78.

<sup>28</sup> Walls, *Cross Cultural Process*, 78.

<sup>29</sup> Walls, *Cross Cultural Process*, 81.

<sup>30</sup> Walls, *Cross Cultural Process*, 79.

<sup>31</sup> Bernhard Ott, "Mission Oriented Theological Education," *Transformation* 18, no. 2 (April 2001), 74-89 and "Mission and Theological Education," *Transformation* 18.2 (April 2001), 87-98.

<sup>32</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Vinay Samuel, "Christian Scholarship in the Twenty-first Century: A Non-Western Perspective," *Transformation* 19, no. 4 (April 2002), 231.



## ***Book Talk -*** **With Paul Chilcote and Lacey Warner**

*An Interview by Daniel E. Lebo*

AETE caught up with evangelism scholars Paul Chilcote and Lacey Warner and asked them a few questions regarding some of the issues raised in their book, *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*.

Groundbreaking studies in evangelism continue to surface. The broad range of perspectives concerning the practice of bearing witness to the faith requires guides who can organize material so that evangelism can be examined carefully and thoroughly. With their book, *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church* (Eerdmans, 2007), evangelism scholars Paul Chilcote (Professor of Historical Theology and Wesleyan Studies and Director of the Center for Applied Wesleyan Studies, Ashland

**Daniel E. Lebo** is an MDiv student and Sider Scholar at Palmer Theological Seminary in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania (USA).

Theological Seminary) and Lacey Warner (Associate Professor of the Practice of Evangelism and Methodist Studies, Duke Divinity School) have proven to be worthy guides. Scholar, student, and layperson alike are able in this rich volume to interact with some of the most influential voices in the field of evangelism over the past few decades. Whether readers are interested in the history or the future of evangelism, they will find plenty to digest in this book.

Recently, AETE caught up with Chilcote and Warner in cyberspace and asked them a few questions regarding some of the issues raised in the book. How did they choose which articles to include? Is it bad for the church to over-intellectualize evangelism? Does the Great Commission have anything to do with our mandate to evangelize? By looking at the church past and present, Chilcote and Warner go further in tackling these kinds of issues.

**Just given the richness of this volume, one immediately gets the impression that the study of evangelism is quite complex. How would you define evangelism concisely and simply for someone who is familiar with the term, but largely unfamiliar with its academic and practical richness?**

**Lacey Warner (LW):** Complex definitions are not always helpful. As Christians, particularly those leading missional/evangelistic congregations, distillation of language and prioritizing of tasks is needed. However, defining evangelism is often done too simply, excluding significant biblical themes that indicate a rich and full process, as well as possible events, in which humans participate with God. That said, evangelism can be defined faithfully in simple ways that point toward the depth of biblical foundations and God's essential role. One way to (relatively)

simply define evangelism is: All Christians are commissioned by our baptisms to share the gospel in our words and in our lives as a response to God's love in Jesus Christ. Of course, this could be simplified even further: Sharing God's love with others, and inviting them to receive God's love and reign. Often it is assumed that we, human beings, can accomplish evangelism on our own, when the Triune God is the primary actor in converting individuals to Christian faith. We are invited to participate in evangelism by sharing our experiences of God's love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit and inviting others to receive this life.

**Paul Chilcote (PC):** The heart of evangelism, of course, is the evangel – the good news of God's love in Christ Jesus. And just like the gospel, evangelism is both simple and complex. In our volume, we describe evangelism as a missional practice of the church. This phrase identifies several elements that have not been appreciated fully in the past. Firstly, evangelism is a practice; actually, I think it is more proper to say, a network of practices. It cannot be isolated in one event or act. Rather than a skill or technique, evangelism is a way of being Christian that includes a wide range of practices. Secondly, evangelism is an aspect of something larger than itself, namely, the *Missio Dei*. There is an intimate connection between sharing good news and participating in God's rule in life. Mission and evangelism belong together. Thirdly, evangelism is the church's business more than it is an individual's unique calling. In the same way that Christ calls all people to mission, he also calls all his disciples to be "gospel-bearers" in the world. Evangelism,

therefore, is a set of practices in the community of faith through which the Holy Spirit incorporates people into the way of Jesus – God’s mission in the world.

**How do current understandings of evangelism compare with older paradigms throughout church history? Are we breaking new ground in this field?**

**PC:** That’s an interesting question to ask a church historian. Is there anything new under the sun? Most of the discoveries of the recent past with regard to evangelism are actually rediscoveries. As in all ages of renewal in the church, the Bible provides the raw material for these ancient-new insights. I would describe the practice of evangelism in the New Testament as a holistic paradigm, and that is precisely what many are promoting vigorously today. Closer to home, and in a critical vein, I feel that the revivalistic paradigm of the Second Great Awakening in America—a paradigm that has shaped most of the stereotypes related to evangelism today—distorted the holistic vision of the biblical witness. It promoted an understanding of evangelism tied almost exclusively to conversion by means of preaching. I would argue, however, that the biblical model of evangelism is more about making disciples and incorporating them into the way of Jesus. This implies a process, a community, and a network of relationships, all of which are oriented around the reign of God in human history.

**LW:** As scholars—including David Bosch in an essay in our book—have pointed out, most writers through Christian history assumed that the Apostles fulfilled the “Great Commission” of Matthew 28. However, this is not to argue that evangelism was

not practiced. Rather evangelism was more closely tied to and integrated with Christian discipleship. Interestingly, Lent could be viewed as a significant season for evangelism in the early church since it was a time of catechesis and preparation for those hoping to receive baptism and initiation into the church. Rather than breaking new ground, I think we are returning to paradigms of evangelism, though not always called such, from early in the church's tradition and practice. We are recovering an understanding of evangelism not as a technique, but as a part of the church's holistic and powerful witness in and to the world.

**In your introduction you discuss how difficult it is to answer, or even formulate, the right questions when it comes to the study of evangelism. It seems like we have come a long way from a simplistic interpretation of "Go ye into all the world and make disciples;" some would say too far. Do you see any potential problems that may come as a result of overcomplicating the mandate to share the gospel?**

**LW:** Yes. There are potential problems with complicating conversation related to the practice of evangelism. One possible problem is a distraction from a theological reading of biblical foundations. Admittedly, the Bible is not always simple, but to stray from biblical foundations through a growing complexity will undermine the church's ministry of evangelism. On the one hand, the study of evangelism benefits from serious interdisciplinary reflection—even beyond classical Christian theological disciplines—that builds a broader, more effective language and set of practices drawing from the best of history, communications, and other social theories. However, to lose

our grounding in the authority and inspired Word of God would be disastrous.

**PC:** Nothing is more important to evangelism than relationships.

The Spirit creates and shapes Christian disciples by means of this amazing gift that God has given to us as human beings created in God's image. If Christianity, as we often say, is a relationship more than a religion, then how could it not be complicated? All of my relationships in life are complicated; to reduce them to a simplistic interpretation removes their mystery, potency, and joy. The same can be said of evangelism. Evangelism is as simple and as complex as offering love to people and inviting them into the marvelous adventure of growing "further up and further in." Moreover, I would want to say that the Great Commission is not so much a command that we are called to obey as it is a promise into which we are meant to live. Jesus says – my paraphrase – "As you are going into the world permit my love to shine through your words and actions, as individuals and communities, in such a way that others are drawn into my glorious reign."

**While there are quite a few points of view in this volume, it seems like only a few of them, if any, would define evangelism as mere verbal proclamation. As such, proclamation (word) could get downplayed in favor of demonstration (deed). How important a role does the verbal aspect of evangelism play in the process?**

**PC:** What a great question to put to a Methodist! John Wesley, as you well know, was one of the most famous preachers in the history of the church. Preaching will always be an essential

evangelistic practice. My view, however, is that evangelism must always be understood as “preaching *and* . . .” The verbal proclamation of the good news is critical, but of equal importance is the demonstration of the gospel in other practices of the church. The fact of the matter is, despite the fact that John Wesley’s preaching defined early Methodism in many ways, most early Methodists were converted not under his preaching but in the intimacy of small group fellowship. Many were initiated into the way of Jesus by singing the gospel in the hymns of John’s brother, Charles. Perhaps even more importantly, it was at the Communion Table that many, including the Wesleys’ own mother, met Jesus, experienced forgiveness, and began their journey into faithful discipleship. I think we get ourselves into trouble when we conceive evangelism as *only* preaching or *only* verbal proclamation.

**LW:** Verbal proclamation is essential to evangelistic ministry.

Without a message that acknowledges the uniqueness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, evangelism becomes another recruiting tool, or self-help strategy. The church is the body of Christ. The salvation narrative gives meaning and context to our personal narratives and enables us to participate, through baptism and initiation into the body of Christ, in the ongoing narrative and unfolding of God’s reign. However, without practices to embody that proclamation both are empty. Christian discipleship is a whole life. Rotary International is a fine institution, currently working to eradicate the disease of polio worldwide. Their work and message are not inconsistent with the Christian gospel; however, it is constrained to human effort

and skill. The verbal proclamation of the gospel, through traditional practices of testimony as well as new uses of technology, invites God's creation to live eschatologically in relationship with the Triune God and one another.

**With current church demographics becoming more international and churches in the non-Western world becoming a dominant voice, how important is it to incorporate diverse perspectives into a cohesive understanding of evangelism?**

**LW:** It is essential! The church is vital and growing around the world, more often outside North America. There is much to learn from the powerful witness of these Christian communities. However, there could be a temptation to assume that in listening to these voices from vital growing churches, those of us in dying churches will discover a recipe for church survival. There is much to learn, but not merely about church survival skills. Our motivation for listening and engaging in relationship would be better oriented toward Christian fellowship, hospitality and mission together. In relationship, we will witness the power of the Holy Spirit in contexts different, and yet sometimes surprisingly similar, to our own. In receiving the evangelistic ministries of our brothers and sisters and Christ, we can learn more about our own sin, and the promise of salvation for this world, and the next.

**PC:** Well, on one level, you have identified the very purpose of this volume. The inclusion of other voices enriches the community of faith in many ways. The history of the church demonstrates to us rather dramatically that we can, in fact, lose sight of the



basics. Sometimes we rediscover what is really important in terms of Christian faithfulness by seeing it lived out in others. Perhaps this is particularly true in situations around the world that are characterized by suffering and oppression. Christianity is a profoundly contextual religion.

Nothing demonstrates the importance of contextuality more than the incarnation. In Jesus Christ, God entered human history at a particular time and in a particular place. All of us are called to live out the faith in our own unique settings in time and space. I believe that God delights in the variety surrounding us at every turn and calls us to learn from one another. For evangelism to be authentic witness to good news, it must take context seriously. I am currently working on an editorial project entitled “Making Disciples in a World Parish: Global Perspectives on Mission/Evangelism.” I am in the process of compiling the insights of thirty-some scholar/practitioners from every continent around the globe. Throughout the course of this collaborative work, I have been amazed by the gifts that we all have to offer one another. No one loses when all share together.

**The articles in *The Study of Evangelism* were included because they have helped develop trends in evangelism scholarship throughout the twentieth century. Where do you see trends going in the next 10-20 years?**

**LW:** I hope the study of evangelism will continue to engage an increasing number of diverse voices, both in ethnicity and context as well as disciplines. As you acknowledge in the previous question, and Dana Robert’s essay in [our book]

observes, the church is growing and the reign of God emerging far beyond the boundaries of the United States and Canada. An interdisciplinary conversation that focuses upon the theology and practice of evangelism in international contexts has almost endless possibilities for deepening understandings and encouraging faithful ministries. To offer a bit more specificity to possible trends, in addition to the growing integration between evangelism and discipleship, another significant area for conversation is in and with ecclesiology. Darrell Guder's recent work, among others, unpacks a missional hermeneutic drawn from biblical texts for the church's mission in the world. This, too, will be a helpful and exciting conversation for the future of missional evangelism.

**PC:** I think we have a long way to go in changing typical attitudes about evangelism both in and outside the church. Inside the community of faith, evangelism is still a word that strikes terror in many. Dominated by images of televangelists, street preachers, and door-to-door peddlers of the gospel, you can understand why so many would shy away from “gospel sales,” neither having the skills nor embracing the image. But, if evangelism is conceived as a network of practices in which the whole people of God are engaged—including the provision of hospitality, vibrant worship in the community of faith, engagement in social service, as well as living and teaching the faith in day-to-day activities—then, I believe it will capture the hearts and minds of faithful people. Who would not want to “be good news”—a part of a gospel-bearing community? One important trend, therefore, has to do, quite simply, with the

necessary work of translating a more holistic vision of evangelistic practice into life. Directly related to this is another current development that will continue to influence Christian disciples and communities, namely, the rediscovery of a “mission-church paradigm.” I hope a lot of energy is poured into interfacing missional models of the church with a renewed concern for evangelistic practice. The two simply go hand in hand. I also look forward to the fruit that another trend will produce over time, namely, the greater inclusion of women. As has been the case in other theological disciplines, men have dominated conversations about evangelism pretty much up to this point. This will no longer be the case. If the church were conceived as a choir, we need all the voices in order to produce the fullest and richest sound possible.

**When trying to decide what articles would make it into this book I imagine there was a ton of material left on the cutting room floor. If you would be able to make a “Director’s cut,” would you include other readings?**

**PC:** You are absolutely right! There is actually much more on the floor than between the covers of this book. Instead of citing individual articles, permit me to lift up the names of just a few scholars that continue to influence my vision: Dana Robert, with her wide-ranging knowledge of mission history; the late Robert Webber, with his “ancient-future” vision; J. N. K. Mugambi, with his interface of serious biblical study with African experience; Howard Snyder, with his global vision of the future; Brian McLaren, with his emergent village paradigm;

and Elaine Heath, with her synthesis of women, postmodernism, and the mystical way. I've only just begun!

**LW:** Yes, if able to make a “Director’s cut,” there are numerous additional readings to include, though these choices lead in a number of directions, each important. As I have mentioned, the interdisciplinary conversation related to evangelism is an important trajectory, first among the classical Christian theological disciplines, Bible, history, theology, but then also disciplines that offer particular opportunities for interfacing themes. The strength of such study and practice is at depths of connection, not in isolation. Additional volumes could easily be filled with essays and excerpts from primary and secondary sources in Christian theology broadly construed. Since there is so little mention of evangelism in major theological studies, though this is shifting, one possibility is to ask Christian theologians and ethicists to reflect upon the theology and practice of evangelism for the church. In any case, I am grateful for the community of scholars, and practitioners, currently working on the area of evangelism. I look forward to this journal’s continued contributions as well as the contributions of colleagues as we enjoy and engage in this profound and meaningful work of the reign of God.

## Book Reviews

### **Search and Rescue: Becoming a Disciple Who Makes a Difference**

by Neil Cole

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008. 240 pages

*Reviewed by Steve Munz*

Neil Cole has a burden to make disciple-making disciples. This has led him to develop his Life Transformation Group (LTG) system, a plan for reproducing Christ-followers that was introduced in Cole's 1999 book *Cultivating a Life for God*. Cole's latest book, *Search and Rescue: Becoming a Disciple Who Makes a Difference*, elaborates on the LTG system, which advocates multiplication at the smallest possible unit. According to the LTG, multiplying multipliers through gatherings of two or three will also multiply small groups and churches. When two or three become four, the group splits into two pairs, and each pair in turn grows and multiplies.

The LTG's genius lies in its accessibility. "The LTG consists of three essential disciplines for personal spiritual growth—confession of sin, a steady diet of Scripture, and prayer for others who need Christ" (168). By simply practicing repentance, faith in God's revealed Word, prayer for kingdom expansion, and proclamation to the poor ("the desperate" in Cole's terminology), any believer can quickly and easily apply the method in his or her own life.

But in spite of the strengths of the LTG system, I found *Search and Rescue* disappointing for two main reasons. First, *Search and Rescue* departs from the humility and simplicity of *Cultivating a Life for God*. Cole's assumption seems to be that the Western church is failing in its calling to make disciples, and the LTG is the obedient corrective. This posture is subtle, but manifested throughout the language of the book. For example, he compares church growth "in the West" to church growth in China, as fostered by eighteen year old lay-women. He concludes that "When we obey Jesus in [the] Great Commission, all authority of heaven and earth goes with us in the work. If this is so, we should be seeing greater fruitfulness. The only reason we do not is that *we do not go forth believing* in this powerful truth" (70-72, italics mine). Here Cole groups all Western Christians together and labels them *unbelieving*. By implication they are disobedient. This raises serious questions: Is obedience synonymous with the LTG system? Do smaller numbers, or the use of another system, indicate unbelief? Is such unbelief *the only reason* the Western church is growing differently from the Chinese church?

The second cause of disappointment is related. Cole repeatedly creates dichotomies that discredit other ministries in an attempt to further endorse his already laudable LTG system. Chapter 5 argues

that *multiplying* disciples has tremendous power. But he unfairly belittles *adding* disciples. “Stop applauding the pathetic success we see in addition and start longing again for the incredible power of multiplication” (77). Chapter 8 helpfully draws attention to the prominence of the “two or three” model of disciple-making found in Scripture. Yet Cole incorrectly presents Scripture’s endorsement. “The perfect size group for life change in the Bible seems to allow for options, *but only two*: two or three” (123; italics mine). Cole must have overlooked Peter’s Pentecost sermon in which “about three thousand were added” (Acts 2:41, NIV). *Search and Rescue* convincingly presents a magnanimous system. Yet Cole’s unnecessary exclusions (e.g. adding disciples, influencing large numbers at once, etc.) threaten to undermine the credibility of his otherwise helpful insights (e.g. seek to multiply, be responsible with the small numbers, etc.).

In spite of the book’s weaknesses, Cole’s zeal for making genuine disciples is both evident and inspiring. Much can be learned from his commitment to making disciples not only in name but also in action. It is unfortunate, however, that *Search and Rescue* obscures the simplicity of these lessons (which he stated clearly in *Cultivating a Life for God*) with unnecessary dichotomies and anecdotes that highlight Cole’s own heroic qualities.

**Steve Munz** is associate pastor of City Line Church, a holistic, multicultural congregation in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania (USA).

# **GloboChrist: The Great Commission Takes a Postmodern Turn**

By Carl Raschke

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008. 176 pages

*Reviewed by Matt Eloffson*

After initially observing her new surroundings in the land of Oz, young Dorothy looks down at her canine companion Toto and utters the famous line, "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore." Likewise, anyone who briefly surveys current events and political, economic, philosophical, and even theological trends across the globe will probably have an overwhelming urge to echo a similar proclamation. In his book, *GloboChrist: The Great Commission Takes a Postmodern Turn*, Carl Raschke acknowledges the dramatic changes occurring in the world and contemplates how religious America and more specifically American evangelical Christians might endeavor to live out the Great Commission more faithfully in this rapidly shifting context.

While different groups of evangelical Christians squabble over the nature and extent of the postmodern turn, Raschke rightly contends that this shift has undeniably occurred and suggests that we would be naïve to think that the world around us is not already largely "postmodern," if not "post-postmodern." Although he is not the first to make such a claim, the perception of postmodernism he articulates deviates from many of the common arguments made by various contemporary Christian writers. He dismisses the familiar philosophical and theological arguments as passé, while equating postmodernism with globalization and designating the phenomenon as "globopomo." He employs the terminology of Ellen Frost in



explaining globalization as a "long-term process of connection and transformation" that "sets in motion a living, expanding, and highly uneven network of cross-border flows" from goods and services to people and ideas (27). This ever-increasing exposure to divergent cultures and ideas is perpetuated by what Derrida referred to as "tele-technoscience" and leaves in its wake a world of uncertainty. As people around the world experience the ambiguity that arises from globalization, multitudes are flocking to some form of religious belief for stability, especially in the global South. According to Raschke, this increase in fervent religious adherence around the world has been a primary catalyst for the hostility regularly expressed against Western cultural ideals. He argues that it is not so much a reaction against Western culture in and of itself, but against the secularity that is so prominent amongst many of its nations. This leads him to conclude that many of the current conflicts occurring globally are a result of a "clash of revelations," not necessarily a "clash of civilizations."

The influence of globalization in shaping cultures around the world and the increasing numbers of people turning to religious faith as a result set the stage for Raschke's discussion of what a "postmodern" approach to fulfilling the Great Commission might involve. He emphasizes a number of critical ideas that he believes should inform our attempts at developing a "GloboChristianity." First and foremost, he argues we must be incarnational because the gospel is much more about relationships than it is about revelation. We must "share life" with the people to whom we are ministering just as Jesus did during the first century. Directly related to any effort to live incarnationally within a community is the intentional contextualization of the gospel in a manner that is faithful to its "dynamic universal core" (56) and

appropriate to the community in which one resides. In light of the rapid expansion of Christianity in the global South, cultivating and partnering with indigenous Christian communities is another important theme raised throughout his work. While some readers will immediately caution that this might lead to all forms of syncretism, Raschke defends his claim by asserting that the church from its very origins has exhibited syncretic and adaptive strategies as the gospel spread from the Jews to the Gentiles in the first century and then throughout the numerous cultures it has encountered since. He concludes by outlining a vision for a “reinvented, postmodern, global, evangelical Christianity” that is radical, relational, revelatory, rhizomic and informed by an “eschatological fervor.”

Overall, this book represents an important first word in a long overdue conversation regarding how Christians understand and live out the Great Commission in a rapidly changing context. We must begin to recognize how our own culture has influenced the manner in which we understand the gospel and the Christian life. For far too long, many American evangelical Christians, myself included, have thought that we had a corner on defining the faith and have “exported” a uniquely American version of it to the rest of the world. However, Raschke calls Christians on both the “right” and “left” to recognize that our world has changed and we must authentically partner with our brothers and sisters throughout the world in order to more faithfully develop our own participation in the Great Commission on a global scale.

While I believe Raschke’s work is compelling, there are several areas that he could have developed further. For instance, his vision for a reinvented Christianity being radical, relational, revelatory, and

rhizomic is rousing for anyone attempting to live out the Great Commission in contemporary culture. However, it would have been beneficial for the author to expand upon his own understanding of each of these and provided more insight as to what the practical implications for Christians attempting to live in this manner might be, especially those American evangelical Christians he was addressing.

Furthermore, some of the broad strokes used in generalizing about different ideas and groups of people should have been avoided. A more nuanced explanation of some of the various elements Raschke discussed would have been helpful and added credibility to his overall argument. For example, his discussion of the 10/40 Window reveals a somewhat limited understanding of the concept as employed by most missiologists. In his discussion, Raschke claims that many Christians overlook the obvious that the “countries and cultures in this zone...are predominantly Muslim” (94-95). I am not convinced that thoughtful Christians engaging this area of the world overlook the prominence of the Muslim faith. And while many of the countries and cultures in North Africa and the Middle East are in fact Muslim, the two most populous countries included in the 10/40 Window, which stretches from northern Africa through the Middle East to Southeast Asia, are India and China. These countries, which represent over one-third of the world’s population, are predominantly Hindu and Buddhist respectively. So despite Raschke’s claim, Islam does not represent the only barrier Christians encounter as they attempt to live out the Great Commission in the midst of the 10/40 Window. This is just one of the examples of the broad strokes the author utilized that did not adequately represent the idea or people group he was engaging.

Overall, I think Raschke's book is an invaluable conversation starter as to what it means to fulfill the Great Commission in an increasingly "postmodern" world. I affirm Raschke's conclusion that "The challenge is to be able to frame the non-negotiable truth of the Christian witness in terms that will have a genuine, planetary impact, where Christ will become GloboChrist once and for all" (148). However, based on his emphasis on incarnation, contextualization, and indigenization; we might be better served by employing the designation "GlocoChrist" because it would emphasize the global or universal nature of Christ, while simultaneously acknowledging the "local" flavor that we all bring consciously or subconsciously to our understandings of the Christian faith.

**Matt Elofson** is Assistant Professor of Practical Theology at Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, California (USA).

## **Springs Of Living Water: Christ-Centered Church Renewal**

by David S. Young

Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2008. 389 pages

*Reviewed by Robert G. Hughes*

*Springs of Living Water* is both the title of this helpful book and a spiritual renewal process for individual congregations and larger clusters of churches. David Young has introduced this dynamic approach with evident success in a variety of churches and denominational settings.

Rather than a cookbook of standardized recipes to be followed slavishly, the *Springs* approach states clearly that renewal is not a straight path. While Young carefully numbers and sequences steps

in the journey—first upward, then inward, and finally outward—the key to renewal is regularly identifying the activity of God into which a congregation may enter. To this end, Young builds ample reflection times into the multiple-year journey and acknowledges the likelihood of unplanned Spirit-led outcomes.

In the chapter “Leading With A Basin and Towel,” Young espouses “servant leadership” as essential to a Christ-centered process of renewal. Robert Greenleaf’s essay *The Servant As Leader* was pivotal in Young’s own development, and ten traits of servant leadership are fleshed out in this chapter and integrated into the entire book.

As indicated, spiritual renewal of both leaders and congregations is at the heart of the *Springs* process. While David Young’s own Saturday morning discipline—including prayer, Bible reading, journaling, devotional classics and discernment—will not suit the needs of every leader nor fit comfortably into liturgical traditions, the book provides suggestions aplenty for individuals and congregations to discern God’s mission and the work of the Holy Spirit in their midst.

It is important for a congregation to determine where it is, and is not, in realizing its vision; yet danger lurks in becoming obsessed with real or imagined weaknesses. Young instead advocates a process of renewal that identifies and builds on what is right rather than on what is wrong. Celebrations that acknowledge God’s guidance and human effort as milestones are reached are momentum builders for the next leg of the journey.

While many of the steps Young identifies are noted in most books on church renewal (e.g. calling a team, training leaders, articulating a vision, crafting a plan), several emphases stand out.

The chapter on discerning the spiritual movement of renewal is welcome. The “spiritual disciplines folder” of themes and Bible readings for each day may be helpful in drawing a congregation into an intentional walk of faith. The need for a biblical vision at the heart of renewal is granted, but Young’s insistence on focusing the journey in a single Bible passage (e.g. John 4, the woman at the well) seems overstated.

I recommend *Springs Of Living Water: Christ-Centered Church Renewal* for use by church leaders in planning and implementing the process of renewal. In addition to the strengths noted above, the material is written clearly and the end-of-chapter questions make *Springs* useful for leadership training. While many vignettes and references are drawn from the Anabaptist tradition, and the enumeration of some 24 separate renewal steps makes the process appear unduly complicated, wise leaders can utilize the book as a manual, picking and choosing what seems to fit a particular initiative and setting.

**Robert G. Hughes** is Professor Emeritus at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (USA).

## **Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around And Yours Can, Too**

By Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson

Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007. 226 pages

*Reviewed by Michael Gehring*

Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson have written a helpful, practical book in which they argue that declining churches do not have to resign themselves to a slow march to marginalization or death, but can change course and grow. The authors believe churches can

comeback, and they studied 324 churches that did, in fact, accomplish a significant turn around. The churches they studied represented ten different evangelical denominations. Their rationale for focusing only on evangelical churches is they “... wanted to focus on churches where Scripture is an assumed priority” (1). Even though this book is based on evangelical churches, it offers much for mainline pastors who serve in denominations which have been in decline for almost half a century.

Charting a new course for a long term declining church requires visionary leadership and courage, as it will exact a cost upon the leader. Stetzer and Dodson do not shy away from counting the cost, nor do they paint an idyllic portrait of the toll of this undertaking. Obviously with 3500 to 4000 churches closing their doors every year, turn arounds are not easily achieved; for if they were, the number of failed churches would not be so high. Churches are homeostatic institutions and transformations are hard won.

The authors argue that comeback requires three elements: (1) spiritual energy in “the lives of individual believers and the church family brought about by revival;” (2) “the church is restructured around its missional purpose;” and (3) a long-term commitment to change (54, 55). Comeback churches emphasize worship and preaching. They are intentional and strategic in their evangelism casting a compelling vision. They develop a discipleship system that helps people grow deeper in their faith journey, and they mobilize people to be involved in ministry. They also connect people through small groups. Comeback churches make the necessary changes to facilities and staffing and allow their vision to

shape those needs and not allow existing facilities and staffing to shape the vision.

*Comeback Churches* is a very helpful book and should be given to every seminarian, and every new pastor. The seasoned pastor who has spent time reading in this genre of literature will not find the information presented especially novel; but the information is presented in a helpful format that one could use in small group studies in one's church to let laity be given windows into the problems of not only their own churches, but also churches across the landscape of the United States. And more importantly, *Comeback Churches* helps both pastors and laity dream dreams of how their churches can buck the trends and bring a new vitality into their own faith communities. I personally wish the authors would have included demographic information on the areas surrounding those 324 turn around churches, however.

**Michael Gehring** is Senior Pastor of First United Methodist Church in Lincolnton, North Carolina (USA).

## **The Mystic Way of Evangelism: A Contemplative Vision for Christian Outreach**

By Elaine A. Heath

Baker Academic, 2008. 207pages

*Reviewed by Paul W. Chilcote*

Too many publications in evangelism and mission either focus totally on academic analysis or on pragmatic programming. In contrast, Elaine Heath's new book is a refreshing surprise. *The Mystic Way of Evangelism* opens up new avenues of exploration in evangelism as a churchly practice and an academic discipline.



Building on William Abraham's groundbreaking definition of evangelism as initiation into the Kingdom of God, Heath explores new territory of her own by reframing the relational character of evangelism in terms of holiness as the "greatest apologetic for the gospel." She grounds this new trajectory in the "great exemplars of holiness—the Christian mystics," thus requiring the theorists and practitioners of evangelism to re-engage the Christian tradition in light of contemporary spiritual longings.

Heath makes an original and creative contribution to the discipline and practice of evangelism by engaging in a kind of *resourcement*, not as a mere intellectual project, but rather a missional vision for engaging the "postmodern hunger for mysticism" at a time when the Western church is entering a dark night of the soul.

One of the strengths of her work is that she identifies a real hunger in contemporary culture and addresses it by considering evangelism through the eyes of mystics. More importantly, she develops a praxis model of contemplative evangelism, and creates a narrative that imagines the implementation of the model in local churches in ways that make it possible to reconceive the mission of every congregation.

In a format reminiscent of William Abraham's book, *The Logic of Renewal*, and using the classic contemplative stages of purgation, illumination, and union, Heath lays out a contemplative vision of evangelism in three parts. In Part One, she describes the "dark night of the soul descending on the church in the United States." In Part Two, she draws five key elements of a contemplative vision from the comparison of ten Christian mystics considered as pairs in five chapters. These include, among others, Hans von Balthasar

and Julian of Norwich, Phoebe Palmer and Father Arseny, Thomas Kelly and Henri Nouwen. In Part Three, she tells a fictional story of a man named Sam and how he is evangelized by a church engaged in contemplative practices.

I will be using her book in my Missional Church class this spring because it combines theological research with reflection on local church practice. Heath's approach serves pastors and congregations well, grounding them in the larger ecclesial tradition and encouraging bold ventures in contemporary practice.

One weakness of her contemplative evangelism project is its lack of precision in identifying the location of the corporate dark night of the soul. Granted, her application of the "dark night" experience to the corporate malaise of the church is illuminating. It is, I believe, similar to the reflections of theologians like Rusty Reno and Ephraim Radner, but also more accessible to pastors and congregations. Still, it is never quite clear whether it applies to the mainline churches or to Bible belt evangelicals who shun the divorced. Further, her critique tends toward a generalized reference to sexism, racism, classism, as if the naming of these three ideologies is a sufficient account of the wounds of human sin. Specifically, in the case of her exposition of "eco-evangelism," she rightly names alternative forms of church which care for the earth, but she does not address in any way the danger that eco-evangelism itself may be co-opted by a "green" ideology or become merely one more moralistic crusade by a church seeking relevance.

Heath realizes the need for more theological reflection on the dark night as a corporate reality. The appendix to her book acknowledges her critics, and rather than dismissing them invites

them to continue reading the mystics as possible conversation partners.

Heath comments in *The Mystic Way* that “seminaries are not, as a rule, organized around prayer, nor are they focused on the pedagogy of the soul.” As an author, however, Heath has the kind of compassionate, practical wisdom and spiritual discernment that points pathways toward a more contemplative vision of theological education and evangelistic practice.

## **The God of Intimacy and Action: Reconnecting Ancient Spiritual Practices, Evangelism, and Justice**

by Tony Campolo and Mary Albert Darling

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007. 256 pages

*Reviewd by Paul W. Chilcote*

In a technological age in which people often locate solutions to problems in the latest gadget, devise, or technique, it is refreshing to encounter an exploration of authentic Christianity that seeks to ground discipleship in a powerful, personal relationship with the living God. This foundation of authentic Christianity, discussed by Tony Campolo and Mary Albert Darling in *The God of Intimacy and Action*, not only connects the believer with other faithful followers of Jesus in community, but also insists upon the integral nature of ancient spiritual practices, evangelism, and justice. Campolo and Darling present a holistic vision of Christian spirituality and life that embraces connections—vertical and horizontal connections—and reminds the reader of perennial connections across the spectrum of time that are life-giving and character-shaping.

Campolo opens this examination of intimacy and action with three chapters that articulate the mystical way of knowing God intimately. He defines the Christian mystic as “one who

experiences God in transrational and nonempirical ways” (4). For the mystic, the Spirit breaks into the consciousness with new insights, establishes a growing awareness of the wondrous nature of life, fosters a desire for intimacy, and nurtures humility, tender love, and commitment to justice. In his development of a holistic vision of life in Christ, Campolo connects mysticism with personal evangelism. The mystical cultivation of a “spiritual first love” must precede and ground evangelistic practice or it will become “nothing more than a legalistic lifestyle to uphold or a duty to be performed” (26). Likewise, commitment to the reign of God and working for justice in the world must accompany saving faith and spiritual transformation or the gospel remains truncated and denuded of its power and purpose. Campolo uses John Wesley’s model for Christian renewal to illustrate a holistic gospel that refused to separate personal salvation and social action.

In the second part of the volume, after delineating the connections between this holistic gospel and the mystical way, Darling discusses the importance of cultivating holy habits—intentional, regularized practices that form disciples in Christ-likeness and nurture love of God and others. She describes three spiritual disciplines, in particular, the prayer of examen, *lectio divina*, and centering prayer, all of which are ancient practices that enable the Christian believer to live in and for God’s vision of shalom with great intensity and devotion. The founder of the Society of Jesus (or Jesuits), Ignatius Loyola, figures prominently in these discussions and his *Spiritual Exercises* provide important keys to a reawakened understanding of the Christian life as devotion. She provides step-by-step guidance in terms of habituating these practices in daily life. The prayer of examen, rooted in Psalm

139:23-24, focuses recollection on the events and encounters of a specific and limited span of time. It involves sifting through joys and sorrows, struggles and delights in an effort toward great self-understanding and intimacy with God. The practice of *lectio divina*, divine or sacred reading, refers to a particular way of reading the Word of God. It entails a meditative process through which the Word sinks deeply into the consciousness and resolve of the believer, moving contemplation of scripture into action in life. In the 1970s, Trappist monks rediscovered the ancient practice of centering prayer, the third spiritual discipline that Darling examines, the purpose of which is reducing obstacles in times of contemplation. "Centering prayer can create an intimacy with Christ," claims Darling, "that many who practice it say they rarely find elsewhere" (142).

In the final section of the book, Campolo and Darling instruct the reader on how to take intimacy with God into the world. Christian spirituality, they argue, involves balance; one must always safeguard oneself against the temptation to separate intimacy and action. Intimacy without action leads to a narcissistic spirituality, while action without intimacy leads to spiritless service. The spirituality of Martin Luther King, Jr. demonstrates the centrality of a community in the maintenance of this balance, and contemporary movements such as Iona, Renovaré, emergent and new monastic communities provide models in which evangelism and commitments to social justice are interwoven faithfully and effectively. Campolo and Darling provide a compelling vision of a holistic gospel that refuses to separate prayer and mission, intimacy with God and gospel-bearing in a broken world.

**Paul W. Chilcote** is Professor of Historical Theology and Wesleyan Studies and Director of the Center for Applied Wesleyan Studies at Ashland Theological Seminary in Ashland, Ohio (USA).

# ***The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity***

By Soong-Chan Rah

Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009. 228 pages

*Reviewed by Montague Williams*

Soong-Chan Rah offers a needed voice to the academic study and ecclesial practice of evangelism with his recent book. He counters claims that the prevalence and influence of Christianity in the United States is fading and explains that such conclusions are due to a narrow focus on Christianity within the context of white, middle-class populations. The statistics of declination do not apply to the other cultural contexts in the United States, including recent and coming immigrants. Christianity in America is not dying.

Rather, it is becoming multiethnic (12). The problem for evangelicalism is that its leadership in theological education and national gatherings is still “dominated by white Americans” (18). *The Next Evangelicalism* is Rah’s attempt to bring this problem to light and encourage evangelicalism to embrace the coming change.

Rah divides his book into three parts. The first part clarifies that evangelicalism’s theological practices have been shaped by the Western exaltation of individualism, consumerism, materialism, and racism. Rah convincingly argues that, “Racism is America’s original and most deeply rooted sin (68).” However, in its attempt to make churches marketable, evangelicalism has supported rather than address it (58). This discussion flows into the book’s second part, which highlights the church growth movement and megachurches, the emergent church, and cultural imperialism as prime examples of evangelicalism giving in to the marks of “Western, white cultural captivity” (a phrase Rah often uses

throughout the book). In a brief history of the church growth movement, Rah shows how it originated in the misinterpretation of churches growing amidst tribal cultures (98-100). The focus on numerical growth rather than contextual ecclesiology birthed the unfortunately popular homogenous unit principle (98). Rah highlights that adhering to this evangelistic strategy “...has resulted in an American evangelicalism incapable of dealing with the reality of a growing cultural pluralism and ethnic heterogeneity (98).”

Rah sees a similar problem with the wide attention given to “the emerging church” as it is geared only toward suburban, white congregations (109). Contrasting the small amount of emerging churches in the United States to the rapid church growth happening in the various other cultural contexts, he critiques the hype surrounding the movement and calls its name both “offensive” and “arrogant” (124). He reveals the movement simply as the dominance of Western, white culture in the church attempting to carry over from modernity into postmodernity. He closes the second part of the book with a discussion of how this dominance has moved into other countries and cultures. As an example, he points out the four Bible colleges in Thailand that require students to learn Western music (130).

Each chapter in the third part of the book offers a way in which evangelicalism can learn from Christians in various cultural groups and be freed from Western, white cultural captivity. He notes that the hope of salvation is the biblical vision of *shalom community*, which requires an intersection of celebration and suffering theologies. He suggests that evangelicalism can learn theologies of suffering from African American and Native American communities (155). Then, through sharing his experience with

immigrant congregations, he describes an evangelism that is both personal and social. In this chapter Rah lets his readers see how his own story plays a contributive role in his theology. The discussion continues with an assertion that evangelicalism must learn from second-generation, biracial, and multiracial Americans whose experience of constant “liminality” provides a needed perspective in multicultural contexts (187). He closes with the story of a congregation in Chicago that has learned from its second-generation immigrant members how to reach out multi-culturally in a faithful way (198-199). Rah makes clear in his conclusion that along with learning from congregations in these various cultural contexts, evangelicalism needs to accept their leadership (205).

Rah’s work is rich and compelling. His arguments are held together by a consistent theological grounding in the *image of God* and hope for *shalom community*. His discussion of race is sure to make some uncomfortable, but he is very careful and intentional in supporting his thesis. The arguable downfall of the book is a factor that he confesses in the introduction; his emphasis on race when speaking of Western cultural captivity neglects the important discussion of gender (22). However, the relation of evangelicalism to the changing racial and cultural demographics of Christians in America is a topic that must be pursued. Rah’s book has paved the way. It is highly comprehensible, and makes a great fit on syllabi concerning evangelism, ecclesiology, and church leadership.

**Montague Williams** is a PhD Candidate focusing on “Church and Society” at Boston University in Boston, Massachusetts (USA).







IS YOUR CHURCH COMMITTED TO HOLISTIC MINISTRY IN  
PRINCIPLE, BUT UNSURE HOW TO DO IT IN PRACTICE?  
**WORD & DEED NETWORK CAN HELP.**

Word & Deed Network, a ministry of Evangelicals for Social Action and the Sider Center for Ministry and Public Policy, exists for the purpose of supporting churches that are committed to both evangelism and social action, especially among the poor.

A Partial List of WDN Resources and Services:

- Offers workshops led by people who specialize in holistic ministry
- Offers consultation services for churches that want to get started
- Supplies churches with books, DVDs, and other multimedia resources
- Links like-minded churches that are close geographically
- Facilitates urban-suburban church partnerships
- Provides preachers and speakers to churches for Sunday worship or special events
- Connects North American churches with churches in the Two-Thirds World



For more information, visit [www.esa-online.org/worddeednetwork](http://www.esa-online.org/worddeednetwork)  
or call 484-384-2979.

You are warmly invited to attend  
**The Annual Meeting of**



Thursday June 17- Friday June 18, 2010

Techny Towers, outside Chicago.

(See [www.technytowers.org](http://www.technytowers.org))

- ▶ Meet others involved in the teaching of evangelism.
- ▶ Hear Dr. Soong-Chan Rah, Milton B. Engbretson Associate Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism at North Park Theological Seminary, lecture on the theme of his recent book, *The Next Evangelicalism* (IVP 2009), and discuss its implications for evangelism.
- ▶ Bring reports on your “work in progress” —a book you are writing, research you are undertaking, a course you are creating—and discuss it with sympathetic colleagues.
- ▶ Attend the Annual Business Meeting of AETE.
- ▶ Stay on for the annual meeting of the American Society of Missiology, also at Techny Towers, from Friday June 18<sup>th</sup> till Sunday June 20<sup>th</sup>.

**COST:** The AETE portion of the gathering will cost approximately \$135 (conference, food and lodging), plus the annual AETE membership (\$40) for 2010-2011.

For more details, watch the AETE website, [www.aeteonline.org](http://www.aeteonline.org),  
or email the President, **Dr. John Bowen**, at [john.bowen@utoronto.ca](mailto:john.bowen@utoronto.ca).

***Witness Journal of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education***

c/o Al Tizon, Palmer Theological Seminary • 6 E. Lancaster Avenue • Wynnewood, PA • USA

