Itineracy in the United Methodist Church Today

Fundamentalism — A Challenge to the Church
James Barr

Preparing to Preach from Ephesians to Northside Church
William H. Willimon

New Birth Through Water and the Spirit:
A Reply to Ted A. Campbell
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Plus Special Feature:
Globalization in Theological Education
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Few images have stayed with me longer than one from the opening scenes of the movie *The Mission*. In it one sees a priest climbing the broken rock face beside a tremendous waterfall in the Andes. Just prior to this scene, we witnessed the martyrdom of a young priest who ventured above the falls to convert the tribe who lived there. They tied him to a cross and set it afloat in the river, which carried him over the falls to his death.

Now the new priest labors up the wet rock, fighting for one hand hold after another, to carry out a mission to this tribe. Why is he doing it? In the sheer intensity of this torturous climb we are shown the credentials of his spirit and his capacity for mission. The central theme of *The Mission* is not so much mission as it is commitment—in this case the commitment of one Jesuit priest to place himself at risk in order to preach the gospel.

The interplay between mission and commitment runs through this entire issue of Quarterly Review. When we gathered ten United Methodist clergy members to talk about itineracy, we expected them to talk about the church's mission. Instead, they asked themselves, Why did I commit to the itinerant system? The mission behind that commitment, however, can be discerned in the personal stories of the panelists and in the vigor of their exchanges with each other.

Many of us have family members, friends, or acquaintances who have pulled away from Christianity as we have traditionally practiced it in our churches. The world of fundamentalism is so exclusive that the easiest thing to do is nothing. But James Barr argues that we have a mission to show fundamentalists a biblically literate Christianity that is not strident or sectarian. His remarks were presented as the Willson Lecture at the Board of Higher Education and Ministry meeting in 1990.

Our series on globalization and theological education continues in this issue with an especially pertinent set of articles. Lamin Sanneh has written a piece whose focus is on Muslim-Christian dialogue, which has been strained and difficult. The
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West, he contends, has used interreligious dialogue as a liberal cause—it has promoted Western cultural superiority while giving ground on basic Christian convictions. But the West does not possess Christianity, and dialogue does not pose a threat to authentic Christian faith. On the contrary, he writes, "It is from the sense of commitment and obligation that dialogue and the other forms of mutual encounter arise, making conversation meaningful rather than superfluous."

Let us say that we are committed to expanding the theological conversation in our seminaries to include non-Western people, ideas, and values. Can it be done without a subtle violence against the other, even in our perceptions of them? Jane I. Smith writes about the terminology of globalization and its hidden messages. She exposes the risks in the dialogue process but calls for us to take them in order to be truly educated and alive to our own faith tradition.

To be fruitful, global thinking must be combined with contextual thinking. That is, those of us who read and think about humankind in general must constantly look for ways to show our partnership with members of local communities. Thomas Thangaraj has worked successfully in this area for many years, and the fruit of his wisdom is included here.

Northside United Methodist Church is the scene of our lectionary study on Ephesians. Willimon used his own church as the context in this study, written in 1982, which we have reprinted in this issue.

Finally, our review section is taken up by a spirited response to an article on evangelical views of baptism in the fall, 1990 issue of QR by Ted Campbell. Charles Hohenstein contends that evangelicals rightly point to repentance of sin and faith in God's grace, but they must never forget that it is God who initiates new birth.

May you be empowered by the Holy Spirit to meet new challenges in the months ahead!

Hels: Let’s begin with a working definition of itineracy. What sort of experiences focus this system for you? What gives itineracy its meaning?

Walter: I had everything working well in the church—all the finances were in place, and the parsonage was in good shape with new carpeting in the den—and then we moved. That’s itineracy! The real question is, why did I commit to that? I think I understood, relatively, what the covenant and the call to ministry meant. I wanted to serve in the United Methodist Church, under the system I grew up in. Three of my sons were home for the weekend not long ago, and I was conscious of the influence that 32 years in the system has had on them. They don’t have to live in it any longer, because they’re out on their own. But it’s really part of who I am.

Del Pino: I’m in my second year of a change of appointment. In my former appointment, everything was . . . all the sowing had been done, the watering had been done, and it was time for
a great harvest. But somebody else is going to do that now, I hope. As for my assignment now, itineracy made that possible for me. I'm quite certain I would not have it if I were in a call system. Itineracy brings home to me the extent to which, using Luther's words, I am the freest person of all, and the most bound. I am free to the extent that I can leave an appointment, but bound in being accountable for moving hearth and home, everything.

Russell: I moved to Waxahachie two-and-a-half years ago. It's a place that I'd been occasionally because I have an aunt who lives there, but my children had never been to the town, and neither had my wife. But my grandparents are buried there. My mother and father were married there. Four of my siblings were born just south of there. We've made our home in many great places, but there has also been the joy of a family homecoming for us.

Cho: Since I became a minister in 1966, I've moved six times and I'm looking forward to moving one or two times before my retirement. I've met all kinds of people, been to all kinds of places, and I've learned a great deal, so I'm grateful for the system. On the other hand, when I look at my friends who have achieved significant goals in ministry, like a growing membership of 2,000 or 3,000, building a huge church—I don't have anything to show because I moved around so often! So, on the one hand I feel happy, but some days I think, Maybe I made a mistake.

McArthur: I encounter itineracy now in the struggle with some of the tough issues that arise from it. I served two years on the Cabinet during a time when there was one church in the conference that we could not find leadership for. It got down to the eleventh hour. The bishop consulted with the district superintendent, and they concluded that if they couldn't find anybody out there, they had better make it one of their own. The bishop asked whether I would go, and I went. That was six months ago, and now I'm beginning to wonder how that appointment was presented to the Cabinet. We have the trappings of great secrecy around itineracy, so that if you are invited or
requested by a bishop or Cabinet to go to a church, you may not contact the person who is there already. That means you have to trust secondhand information.

Garcia: What Tom is describing happens far too often across the church. I am familiar with several conferences in which the Peter Principle is the rule of law. Because of the idea that pastors should not take a cut in salary when they move, very often a person who should not be in a church goes there anyway just in order to stay at the same pay level. When the work gets botched up in that church, he or she can just move to another one. This happens across the church; it’s not just one conference.

McArthur: I think itineracy functions on four distinct levels. First of all, there’s the theological level, where we link itineracy with mission of the church. The assumption is that we are finding the best skills for the need at any given time. The second level at which itineracy functions is an administrative level, where you begin taking into account issues like incompetent people. The third level is the one of values. That’s one that bothers me, because I have seen people being lied to and manipulated. There are also things we aren’t allowed to speak about openly as clergy, like the desire for a bigger salary. The fourth level is cultural reality. The itineracy grew up in a cultural milieu in which men made decisions and women followed. There was also a time when the desire to sacrifice one’s life was primary. But people are no longer lining up to sacrifice themselves; they want to get something of value out of their lives.

Russell: I think your perception as to whether the system is good or bad is based on your own experience. I never had a bad appointment until my brothers and sisters in ministry told me I had one. Where I serve I think we’ve had all of the things you’ve talked about. What concerns me most is the possibility of deception on the part of, say, a superintendent in communicating what a church is really like. We tried to solve that problem by developing profiles of churches and pastors, by evaluating systems. But the appointment system does not work
the same for every individual, and people who think it will are going to be disappointed.

**Blum:** Most of us learn pretty quickly that the system works very differently for different people. In the 70s, when I became available for appointment, the system was subject to the law of supply and demand. What I heard was, "We don't have enough churches, so your availability is less important to us at this point." Living through the slow process of becoming a part of the covenant taught me that the system works very differently for white men in my area than it does for white women, or for women and men of color. Since that time I've had some excellent experiences with itineracy, particularly in the last half of the eighties, and my own family has come to live within that very effectively. But I received a powerful message in those early years: that the system didn't need me and that mission seemed to be of fairly low value.

**Harnish:** For a definition of itineracy, I go back to the old terminology of traveling orders—I'm a traveling member in full connection. My commitment is not just to local church, but I'm a member of the annual conference. That took on meaning for me recently, when it came time for me to move. There were people in the conference who didn't think I was a traveling elder in full connection because I'd been in one church for 10 1/2 years—even though I took those years one at a time. So I agreed to move, even though I didn't particularly want to. But the general commitment was there, and the time seemed right.

**Griffith:** I think we ought to demythologize the itineracy—it's a management system, and that's all it is. It works as long as there is trust and openness and honesty, but when we begin to play games it breaks down. I recall a conversation that I had with my bishop several years ago. He called me into his office and ranted and raved about why I preferred not to accept an appointment. I told him I would take it, but it didn't make sense to me and I told him why. Then he really got angry and ended up by making a vague threat. Six months later he said, "By the way, such and such an appointment is coming up and I was going
to put you there, but because you turned me down on the other appointment, I'm not going to."

Del Pino: It's important to hear what Don [Griffith] is saying about the administrative dimension of itineracy. But I don't think we can reduce itineracy simply to a management system. It was apparent to Wesley and very clear to Asbury that one submitted oneself to that system because it was the will of God. The system was an extension of the call to ordained ministry. If at any point it became antithetical to a person's overall point of view, he could withdraw from it. We misunderstand itineracy if we talk about it simply as a management system. What is the relationship between your calling, your vocation, and the mission of the church?

Treese: I suppose that we would all agree Wal-Mart department stores has one of the best management systems in America today. Wal-Mart's mission is simple: to generate more stores and larger profits every year. If the Nashville store has done well and the Knoxville store is not doing so well, someone needs to figure out a way for the Knoxville store to increase its sales and make more money. The Knoxville store may be a bit smaller. But with the right kind of person in there, it would take off. So the head honcho says to the manager of the Nashville store: "You leave and go to the Knoxville store." And the person goes. Why will that work in a place like Wal-Mart but not in The United Methodist Church? Is it that Wal-Mart, as an organization, has a very clear sense of mission that is supported by its management system? The United Methodist Church ought to decide whether it has a separate concept of mission for each annual conference, district, or appointment, or if there is an overarching sense of mission that itineracy supports. If you don't have a clear sense of mission, then you don't know what itineracy as a system is supposed to support.

Walter: If you can say, "This is why we want you to be there," then I will be encouraged to go to where I'm sent. Not because it's going to be more salary—when I moved that last time I got less salary. But if the Cabinet and the superintendent decide
there’s something that needs to be done there, and that I can make a difference, then I will be eager to go.

_Harnish_: I agree that a critical part of our problem is that we lack a shared sense of mission, of vision and purpose. One of my best friends says, “Well, why should I move? I’ve got this wonderful church that’s growing; there are great things happening; I have a beautiful house; my kids like it; my wife likes it…. Why should I move?” I can’t blame him. But if all 500-plus members of the Detroit Annual Conference hold a shared understanding of our mission and task, then each one will go someplace where he or she can contribute to that mission, rather than just to satisfy their personal calling.

_Blum_: I think that most of the leadership circles in the denomination give us a clergy perspective on mission, and that itineracy itself tends to place clergy needs above congregational needs. The language we use is significant: we will use the word “appointment,” instead of “congregation.” I am in a covenant relationship of mutual support with my brothers and sisters in this annual conference. But very frequently we lose track of the sense of covenant that binds all of us to the life and ministry of the congregations and direct ministry units within that geographical area.

_Harnish_: I had a conversation with some of my colleagues to prepare for our conversation today, and that was our big issue: is the system working to benefit clergy or to benefit churches? So much of the budget of an annual conference goes for the care and feeding of the clergy. When it comes to the appointive system, however, there is enough evidence to show that the Cabinet and bishops are really trying to make the best match for a local church. They operate under constraints, and one of them is availability. There may be somebody who is better than I am for Court Street Church, but if that person moved last December, they’re not going to ask him or her to move again.

_Griffith_: I’m uncomfortable with saying the choice is between the clergy and the local church. It seems to me that the mission is God’s mission. And God’s mission is much broader. We are not talking about a local church but a charge. The gift of United
Methodist polity, as a management system, is that it looks beyond the local church—it looks to the wider community.

Russell: Our theology is going to define what our mission is. I think that theology could inform all four levels, as Tom distinguished them, in the itinerant system. It may be a management system, but I like that system because it fits my theology. We worship a God who sends, a God who goes before you, a God who leads you through the wilderness, a God who calls you to be disciplined and who disciplines you, a God who calls for sacrifice. The church is more than what any one person might make it. There is a church in our conference called Brother Jones' church, because he founded it. But after 20 years, that church was determined to die because at the core it was no more than one person.

McArthur: I'm not sure I want to let Don get away with his Wal-Mart analogy. If you want to work with any one of the four levels within itineracy, you have to be faithful to the principles that apply to that level. When we're talking about a management system, then I believe we need to evaluate that on management principles. Your argument was that there's a clear articulation of mission from that organization. I'm not altogether sure that's why that manager moves.

Treese: Maybe he moves because if he doesn't, he'll be fired. But that's not the only possible motivation, and it's far from the best one. I think the manager goes because in his experience with that company, if you stay in and behave yourself, you will get your reward. So it's not really about Knoxville, but what lies beyond Knoxville. And there's a trust that this is where I'm needed; given my performance, this is where I belong, and I will go.

Garcia: Do you think some of our folk receive appointments with a pay cut or a smaller congregation to prove their loyalty so that they will be taken care of in the future?

Walter: ...then my suggestion is, "Don't go!"

Garcia: I don't know if that happens... I just wondered.

Cho: I think it does. Maybe not frequently, but it happens.
Del Pino: This is a covenant issue. Itineracy cannot work if there is not a serious commitment to the covenant in the first place. That takes honesty and the ability to engage in theological talk about mission. When it came time for me to make this last change of appointment, a cross-racial one, I said to them, "You are going to have to tell me what's compelling about this appointment. Why me?" There must be a purpose for this besides interesting social experimentation. What about the larger strategy of the annual conference?

McArthur: I have no problems with what you're saying, but I still regard itineracy as a management issue. Some of the very finest clergy I know have come within a hair's breadth of being demoralized by the fact that they went to a church with hopes and dreams based on what they understood about a situation. But it was only a part of the picture. When the situation doesn't work, they feel a failure. I've also seen pastors give five years to a church and leave it alive and vital and excited, to be followed by somebody else who wipes it out in six months! Now what kind of management system do we have that allows this to happen? And at what point do you decide that this isn't working?

Blum: Research we did in our annual conference work area on revitalization showed a majority of the churches of all sizes in our conference have been in a pattern of decline in membership for over a decade. Most of the churches that I may serve from now until I retire, in about 30 years, I anticipate will need help in simply living and stabilizing their ministry. The other side of it is this: I have a picture of my elder's class as we entered full connection—a decade later 8 of 13 are still serving in a local church within our conference. Based on what I know about the personal stories of those people who have left, I wonder how many of us will make it to retirement?

Cho: I think we have exaggerated the failures too much. There are an equal number of success stories in the appointment system. As a Methodist pastor, I feel lucky to belong to the itinerant system because, first of all, in 1966 I wouldn't have gotten an appointment if our church had been on the call.
system. The authority of the bishop and Cabinet put me there. Today cabinet members are under all kinds of pressures like guaranteed appointment, a minimum salary system. And it is a norm to move a person from one level to a higher level salary. All these things can take a clear sense of mission and make it murky!

Hels: Let's pursue the link between itineracy and the church's mission in another way. Are there theological models for itineracy in Scripture or tradition? Or if you prefer concepts, what is the major idea that animates the itinerant system?

Russell: I would choose Abraham as a model of faith. He never owned anything in the Promised Land for himself. The only piece of property he ever bought was the cave where he buried his wife.

Blum: For me, Mary is the model, because she was open and obedient before she even thought to protest what it meant for her life. I identify with that because my call came in my youth, before I had an idea that I could raise arguments against it. Moses objected to the demands placed on him in his call, and his obedience came only after this struggle. But for Mary, there is instant obedience, and when there was conflict it was only as she lived out her call. I think of her whole life as a kind of journey that leads to the resurrection.

Cho: The whole prophetic tradition in the Old Testament fits for me here. The first thing that came to my mind was the prophet Isaiah: "Here am I. Send me." Itineracy!

Garcia: The other day I was in Cape Girardeau. We went over to the old McKendree chapel, to the cemetery there. Back in those tough times, what kind of people were traveling around preaching the gospel? And the people that were buried there--how did they receive those preachers? Even though I knew nothing about those people or their families, I began to do some imagining about what might have gone on. That, for me, is a picture of itineracy.

Thomas Harwood is a significant figure for my understanding of itineracy. He was reluctant to go to New Mexico, but he finally went. When he reached Denver, he wondered
how far the mission was to extend. Well, it was to extend as far as he could go. So he set off traveling again, and this time he headed south. Interestingly enough, Hispanic churches had already been established by the time Harwood got there. But the brain behind that Methodist work in New Mexico was never given any leadership of that church. And we lost him—we don’t know exactly how Benigno Cardinales ended up. But on Nov. 20, 1853, in 1853, the first Methodist sermon in Spanish was preached in Santa Fe. From there that man took off and established group after group. And that’s itineracy. So when I think of roots, I think of a mixture of things. I’m grateful for the people who brought the gospel. But I resent the fact that my father in the faith did not get a chance to provide leadership. He was passed over for any kind of recognition of his talents. And yet he showed them.

Griffith: For me the model would be the apostolic community. The apostles had a relationship with Christ that empowered them, and they took it to the known world.

Walter: I think about Francis Asbury—modern, relatively speaking. Early in my ministry three friends of mine and I gathered together at a church out in the country where Francis Asbury had come to preach. It was significant to be in that place and to sense something of that pioneer, circuit rider approach. I’m impressed with the sacrifice it took back then, and I think that it is easy for us in comparison.

Del Pino: I think back on itineracy in terms of paradigms in my own history—my recollection of what it was like in the days of the Central Jurisdiction of the former Methodist Church. One of my father’s associates used to say, “Well, it doesn’t sound like so-and-so really got much of an appointment this year. I guess you could call that an ‘urch!’ But I also heard the enthusiasm about appointments from people who really wanted to be someplace to preach, to be pastor, to be engaged in the work of God. They had a hunger to serve, and it would have made them literally sick to not do it.

I remember one Sunday morning in 1952, at Scott Methodist Church in Detroit, Michigan, my parents received a new ap-
Bishop Wendall Kelly got up after the ordination service was finished. Usually he would have legal pads where his secretary had neatly typed all of the appointments. This time he just got up and said, "I know that at this time of the conference there's great anticipation. I also know that there are many of you who are depending upon all of the conversations that have occurred already. But the Lord spoke to me." And he pulled out a handwritten copy of appointments. At that point my father turned to my mom and said, "We're in trouble." Rather than having us move to Cleveland, Ohio, which had all been worked out, he moved us to St. Paul, Minnesota! We went there for a visit before the move, and he asked me, "Do you think you're going to like your new home?" And I said, "We don't know anybody there." Then he said, "Well, I'm sure that God is going to make a way for us." When I heard that, I knew that things weren't going to fall apart, because he really believed that that's what God intended for his life—and for his family's life.

Harnish: I remember as a child and as a teenager, at Wesley Woods camp in western Pennsylvania, and at camp meeting, pastors and missionaries who convinced me that being in the ministry was the most wonderful thing in the world. For them it meant moving around, and they'd tell their stories of where they'd been. Long before I ever gave a thought to itineracy, there was that underlying conviction that this is a great way to spend your life.

McArthur: With the possible exception of the hymnbook, I'm not sure that anything in Methodism has primary significance for me. The call to obedience, the call to proclaim, to be priest, the call to create order out of which life becomes possible—that's where the fervor comes from. I'm pretty clear that I could do that as a Catholic, as an Episcopalian, as a Presbyterian, as a Congregationalist, or as a United Methodist. So when you come to talk about being a United Methodist, for me the issue is much more pragmatic: How do you do your business? The choice is not between management or no management. It's between good management and poor management.
mitted to the church, and therefore I go. And if I were Pres­byterian, I would do it in that way, or Episcopalian, I would do it in that way. I see nothing magical about what we do as Methodists.

Treese: Historically, we have a lot of romantic notions about itineracy, and yet in the days of Asbury it was really a system that presumed a lot of single white males were going to be sent all over the place. Marriage came along and Asbury didn't quite know how to deal with it. Lots of people complained and many dropped out. Then came station appointments, and people wanting to stay longer, and being moved every two or three years, and all of that. There have always been a lot of complaints over our system. And yet there has been a free, open choice to be in the itinerant ministry of the United Methodist Church, and people stay with it. Now why? Is it that, as Churchill said, "Democracy is the worst form of government, except all the rest." Is itineracy the worst system of deployment except all the rest?

McArthur: It's become home. It happens to be the arena in which I grew up, and within which the call came. But I'm clear in my own mind that I could have done much the same in a different denomination. As far as denominations are con­cerned, I feel really pragmatic about that. I have a great com­mitment—I'm wedded to the Christian Church.

Blum: The sense of "home" is certainly a factor in my decision to be a United Methodist. But my call—which came to me and then was something I learned to understand and to follow—was simply a call to congregational ministry. I had to start all over again to decide whether my home denomination was the best place to realize that. My mentor, who retired a month before I gave birth to my first son, told me that her call also had been to congregational ministry. But the Methodist Church in which she had grown up had closed its doors to her parish ministry. She was able to fulfill her call in another denomination for many years before the United Methodist Church was ready to receive her gifts. My sense is that there are many persons who, because of history and particular circumstances, cannot possib-
ly fulfill their call within the structure of a particular denomination at a particular time. But even if the denomination doesn’t need some of us, God will provide a way for people to exercise their call.

Russell: I also want to respond to Tom about the “accident” of being Methodist, because it was one in our case. Mother was Baptist before we became Methodist, but when she was divorced she wasn’t at home in the Baptist Church anymore. And by the grace of God I’m in the Methodist Church. One mark of who we are is that pragmatism has a very important theological implication—that you’re trying to do the will of God, that you’re trying to do what you’re called to do by the grace of God, and to live that out—and the Methodist system, for me, does that.

Cho: I see another tremendous advantage in being sent or appointed to a certain place. We are not members of the local church. We are a member of the annual conference. There’s a guarantee of freedom to speak out of your conscience.

Del Pino: The freedom of the pulpit is crucial. The United Methodist Church has proclaimed that value in its polity. We don’t have guarantee of appointment just so that ethnics or women get into pulpits, although that is an important byproduct. We have it to ensure that the gospel is freely proclaimed. That’s really the root of it, historically, at least.

Blum: I think Wesleyan pragmatism is a healthy way to critique itineracy today. The question “Are there fruits?” that we ask of ordained ministers should be addressed to the system that we have. Our care of the system should be guided not by how it provides for one part of the church family but by whether or not there are genuine fruits—fruits of the Spirit and fruits of mission that multiply good in the world and life. Pragmatism, I think, is one of the most wonderful things about our tradition. Wesley had women preachers in England because there were fruits from their ministry. A lot of us have hung in there because things were happening. So we should be asking, “Are the tools that brought me into the faith going to bring the next
generation to a vital experience of congregational ministry and personal life in Christ?"

_Treese:_ Ten days ago in St. Louis, 700-plus high school and college-age young people made a commitment to full-time, ordained ministry. Before they go very far in candidacy they should be asked to give evidence that they understand the obligations and the responsibilities of the itinerant system. That way we get people thinking that nobody comes into this church to do as they please. This would be ideal. But most of the time, we wait until problems arise and people start to rebel against the demands and obligations of itineracy.

_McArthur:_ Methodist tradition is important but not a revelation of divine will. You can't change or adapt the system if you close off discussion as if the system were some holy thing. At some point you have to agree to look at it. And on what basis should we do that?

_Harnish:_ I would say that if we dismiss the question of change by saying that the system is sacrosanct, or that this is God's will and therefore we can't talk about it, then we have stopped being truly Methodist. Why did Wesley start field preaching? Not because the Lord told him to. It wasn't like he had a vision. Whitfield talked him into it; and even though Wesley didn't like it, he found out that it worked! What Methodism says is, "Yes, we should take a look at it. And change it if we need to."

_Hels:_ What troubles you most about modern society and contemporary events, and what impact does this have on the life of an itinerating clergyman or woman?

_Garcia:_ One of the most important social trends is high mobility. Pastors aren't the only ones who itinerate—their spouses do, too. On many occasions pastors will not have an appointment because they are in transition from one annual conference to another. Or the pastor stays where he or she was, pending transfer to an annual conference. This has certainly put pressures on the itinerant system, and I think we're going to see more of it in the future.
McArthur: For me the issue of the spouse’s career is primary. My spouse is a respiratory therapist, and she spent eight years becoming manager in the department in which she worked in the Bay Area. We then left and went to Fresno, which meant she quit that job and started at the bottom. After two years in Fresno she quit because I was moved and started at the bottom again. That’s had a devastating effect on our marriage. She made a commitment to move with me in the early years of our marriage, but now it means that she will never be able to do what she’s trained to do.

Harnish: I’m anxious to see what impact the children of the 70s and 80s will have on ministry as they become ordained. These are members of what we have called the “me generation,” who have shown little sense of altruism or concern about other people, about the world. Younger clergy who are just coming into our conference are not interested in district meetings, clergy clusters, annual conference committees, task forces, that sort of thing. They say, “Just let me do my thing in my local church.” They just don’t seem to understand the value of the connection. When they hear bishops and superintendents saying they need to be more committed to the connection, they don’t hear a spiritual call to service; they hear bureaucrats trying to run their lives.

Treese: They base their sense of self-worth and value their peers according to cultural norms—salary, how much free time they have, housing. And they got that, either consciously or not, from us. But the idea of finding your value and your worth in servanthood, going where you’re sent to meet a need, and so on—I think there was more of that when we were beginning ministry.

Griffith: But the “me generation” helped some of us learn that commitment to our children and to our spouses is important and that workaholism will detract from a healthy and whole life. I think the question is, What’s going to be the mission of the mainline churches in an increasingly secular world? How are we going to find out what God is calling us to do to be faithful?
**Blum:** Our most pressing problem is keeping up with demographic change. I've seen congregations closed in recent years in cities where the population has increased, but it was a different kind of population. I've seen the decline of a predominantly older congregation just by natural mortality rates. We need longer pastorates so that we can find ways to reach these new people; we have to be able to stay when people in the parish are coming and going too fast. These days economic changes have young adults entering and leaving communities within two years. The pastor is more likely to be the anchor that provides some security in the midst of this ebb and flow.

**Russell:** A number of people entering my district are second-career people who went out to find their fortune, got the home, got the money, and found there wasn't a whole lot there. They left it and went back to school to become United Methodist ministers. And they are committed to the itinerant system. I have a former Baptist who left the Baptist Church, came into the United Methodist, was a member for a year; and he follows the Discipline. I mean he calls me and says, "Why don't we do it this way? Isn't that what the Discipline says?" And I say, "Sure, but I do bend it a little bit here and there!"

**Cho:** In my view the itineracy will become slower and less efficient, unless something is done about it soon. Salary has become such an important factor. My personal feeling is that we have to raise maybe several million dollars in the conference so that we can compensate pastors according to experience and gifts. Then we can really deploy them where they're needed and where they can do the most effective service. But we're not doing that. The local church salary assumes too much importance because the conference subsidizes up to the minimum level—that's all! And unless that changes, I don't think we can do effective deployment. We have to remove the financial burden of accepting that challenge.

**McArthur:** My generation assumed that the last question that you asked when you entered was questions about salary, housing allowance, or car. Simply to be appointed in the church
was a giddy experience. The new generation seems to have lost that. On the other hand, it seems as if a new generation has permission to ask "Why?" that my generation didn't have, and as a result became codependent and angry with the church. Sometimes I think they trust their ability to raise that question more than they trust the appointed authority.

Blum: Those of us who are "thirty-something" questioned the right of the authorities to send persons off to war in Vietnam. We grew up in a denomination that has been in significant decline for several years without much perception about what to do about it. We've also had a generation of youth groups that have entertained our young, at times without disciplining them. Our churches produced most of the young people who are entering ordained ministry today. I'm grateful that we have developed a candidacy process that provides a lot more spiritual guidance than I was offered in the early 70s when I was exploring a call to ministry. So there has been some renewal in the last decade. I think this is constructive and supportive of itineracy in the future.

Treese: One would hope that in our ecumenical discussions and dialogues that the distinct mission of United Methodism would become clearer. But we are moving with deliberate speed to blend it all together, and in the end all we have is rather tasteless pudding. What a heritage we have to bring, and what a distinct mission! I had a seminary professor who told me, "Mr. Treese, the essence of Methodism in the modern day is the Salvation Army. Are you going to lead your denomination back there?"

Russell: I don't want to blame the system for my not asking "Why?" There were those of my generation who asked those questions, but we didn't pick up on that. We had a tremendous need to be patted on the head, given the promotion, and so on.

Harnish: I think it's OK to ask the question "Why?" But there's a difference between the ordained person who says, "I'm willing to move, but I would like to know why" and the one who says, "I'm not going to move unless you prove to me that I should."
Griffith: When I came into ministry, we had the same questions. I wanted to know where I was going to go. And the question was, Is it going to be a single point or is it going to be two? And when I got a single point—wow, that was great! And I knew that I was going to "work my way up the system."

Harnish: The itinerant system works best when the general assumption is, "Yes, I will go. Just tell me why I'm needed there." Now the assumption seems to be, "No, I want to stay here, unless you can prove to me that another place needs me more." The burden of proof is on the Cabinet. Some of the reasons to stay are good: a longer pastorate, a commitment to family stability. But it is making itineracy almost unworkable.

Griffith: Is it just a stubborn attitude or a desire to make every appointment significant? If we will have four or five appointments in our ministry, we want them all to count. What I'm really saying is, I want my life to count!

Blum: But we need to serve the community through the church, and not just serve the church. We can plant new congregations, or transform and redeem congregational alternatives in certain places where the opportunities for mission abound. Our system is very slow on this right now. I'd love to see it freed up spiritually to respond and come into a new form of being. The itineracy could be effective on the urban frontier in the same practical ways that it was on the rural frontier of a century or more ago.

Russell: But one way we've gotten around that business of serving the community is that we have bought too much into H. Richard Niebuhr's concept of enabling the saints. I'm not saying that this is not part of our ministry—it is. But we're also sent there to convert and to promote vital piety and scriptural holiness wherever we can in that community.

Harnish: When I was in seminary, from 1969-1972, one of the emerging issues we talked about a lot was "burn-out." It was a new word then, a corrective that needed to be heard. But that concern has produced a generation of people whose first word is, "I'm going to take my day off every Wednesday. Don't call me. I'm not available for funerals. I'm not available for wed-
dings. I'm only going to work forty hours a week, because I don't want to burn out."

Del Pino: There are a great many lay members of the church who want decision-making parity but don't want to study the Bible or do basic theological reflection. The other problem is that people assume that all ministry has to be publicly acknowledged, consecrated, or ordained to have any significance. That leaves the itinerating pastor in a weak position, as a kind of caretaker, and keeps lay people from seeing what they do as genuine ministry. If baptized people think they have to be ordained to engage in the mission of the church, they have misunderstood their baptism.

Griffith: I think it is almost heretical to say that ministry flows from baptism. Ministry flows from commitment, whether you call commitment conversion or affirmation of faith. In baptism, you are included in the community, but you have not accepted ministry.

Del Pino: I think that there is a response of commitment to God's prevenient grace, whether by the one baptized or by those who are going to assume that responsibility until that person comes of age. Being included in the community is not fundamentally our own action, but a response to God. It is therefore a public acknowledgement that, if I am not already converted, I am certainly allowing myself to be open and vulnerable to that in the life of this community.

Treese: I recently had a conversation with a bishop—one of the most sensitive and talented I know—who said the most dominant factor in appointment-making today in his area is the matter of dual careers. When I pushed him on how the itinerant system might ultimately deal with this, he said that the couple itself needs to come to terms with the itinerant system. According to him, the system cannot resolve all the difficulties in a two-career household. Is it unreasonable to ask people to make hard choices to honor their commitment to ministry or their spouse's commitment?

Blum: The dual-career issue didn't exist until women started having careers, so I think that's something to celebrate. For
generations, nobody worried much over the pastor's spouse, because her role was pretty much understood and taken for granted. But now, if the pastor is a woman, the church worries about her husband's career! My husband made a decision very early on to follow me in the itineracy. Superintendents seem to want to protect his career interest—when we made no request for it.

God has enabled us to experience a sense of real partnership in the ministry to which I've been appointed, and the two of us have been called to, according to our particular skills, gifts and graces. One bishop said clearly to us, "Make your family decision, and then we'll simply work with the person who is in the covenant." That is the way we have lived.

Harnish: I still think it's a serious issue, Diane. And I don't think it's serious only for female clergy, but for all of us. In my generation, both men and women were raised with the understanding that you should go to college and then have a career. So our wives have been raised with the understanding that they can have a career, too. The church has been saying you can have it all, but there is no way to make that happen consistently. Early in the process we need to tell candidates, "Let's be clear. This is an itinerant system. We cannot accommodate all of your family needs. And if you're going to commit to this system, then you and your spouse are going to have to wrestle with that commitment at some point."

Blum: It's a spiritual journey to itinerate as a family. It's not that I trust the system; I trust God. Ironically, it took difficult experiences with the system to help me to grow into that. When I took the vows at ordination, I didn't know whether my husband would follow me. If we take the opportunity to address this as a spiritual issue with candidates, we will let them see that trust in God lets them put one foot in front of the other in ministry.

Russell: Then perhaps the consultation process should not just include the local church and what their needs are, what their characteristics are, but what the need is and what God is calling us to do in that particular community.
Harnish: Could I take the other side of this now? Many of our spouses make much more money than we do, right at the point when there are high family costs, like college educations. Let’s be real about this. Whose career is going to be accommodated?

Hels: What are the essential needs of congregations and clergy that we must plan for in the next century? What is of the essence, as you think about Christian ministry now and in the years to come?

Griffith: As I look at the future, I think the first thing we need to do is change our attitude and just relax. The next thing is to clarify what our mission is, because until we do that we will have difficulties. I’ve only got about ten more years, and I’m excited about what I’m doing. I feel good about where the United Methodist church is, and I’d like to translate some of that into everyday living.

Russell: I agree that we need to relax, but let’s make it intentional. We should encourage spirituality—prayer, meditation, and spiritual formation—for the clergy and for the church.

Harnish: And I’d like to look at what it means to be Wesleyan in the twentieth century. There’s been a tendency for these current study commissions to ignore our heritage from Wesley, Asbury, Otterbein, and Albright. This is what makes us distinct. This is what we bring to ecumenism. Itineracy is one expression of that distinctiveness.

Del Pino: I think the future calls us to rediscover personal sacrifice. This is the way to restore integrity to covenantal relationships. Church leaders at all levels must be prepared to find out what is non-negotiable, simply not part of a contract. The biblical paradigm of covenant requires us to resist crass cultural values, leave them behind for the sake of the gospel. We must replace individualism with a real sense of community. We must learn how to exercise the teaching office in a more responsible, consistent way. And we have to order the life of our congregation for our mission in the world.

Blum: I believe that the church will come back to life the very moment that it discovers and claims its original mission, bibli-
Itineracy is engaged in that process, then it will bring local churches that have been asleep, or quietly dying, back to life. The other thing is that local churches need to reconnect with the immediate community, as it now exists. Many of our churches have been allowed or even encouraged to stay connected to commuting populations while ignoring people in their immediate vicinity. Then we must take another look at the longer pastorate in those cases, and not just for the senior minister of a very large church. I also want to mention the covenant groups that I am in with other clergy. That’s where I see the connectional system really coming to life as a support and as a guidance system for connecting more directly with God’s will.

**McArthur:** I can’t think about the future without running up against a simple question: What drives us? In the past there was the vision of scriptural holiness. It was so clear and simple that other things fell into place around it. Episcopacy fell in place around it, and so did itineracy. Another example: William Booth couldn’t sleep at night because he was haunted by the footsteps of people going to hell. That simple image really became the genius, the heart, the soul of the Salvation Army.

**Russell:** Vital piety and scriptural holiness may not sound exciting anymore. Today, you have to find other words for the same things. It makes sense to me to speak of God’s prevenient grace, God’s living grace, being worked out in my and your daily living. If that won’t meet the needs of our society, then we might as well give up the ship.

**Del Pino:** I minister to a community that is drowning in options. But underneath it all, the people who are in that community are there because they really do love God. They may not know how to express it, but it’s there. When I ask myself what drives me, I have to finally answer the same thing. If I didn’t do what I was doing as an expression of that love, I really would be an incomplete person. That also applies to the laypersons whom I endeavor to serve and serve with in my parish.
Blum: In my reading I've come across the stories and writings of St. Francis de Sales, a bishop in the sixteenth century who was quite adept at spiritual direction with women. The reason for this bishop's success, one historian observed, was that he had learned to address the issue of self-worth before he started asking them to make sacrifices. In that day and age, a woman was first and foremost the property of husband, father, household and had no independent value in the legal, economic, or social system. You have to know that sense of self-worth before one can genuinely, out of love and gratitude, serve. There will be a different spirit among us as participants in the system if we generally feel that we're valued by God and by those sending us. And then the ability to serve and offer ourselves without reserve will become more prevalent.

Cho: I think that itineracy will be there so long as it works with integrity. If not, there will be rebellion. I don't see any reason why we should idolize or worship certain church structures in the system. There are cases in our sister churches in which they left itineracy and adopted the call system, and they think it's working beautifully. The churches are growing and blossoming—in Korea. Pastors are putting their lives on the line because unless they succeed here there is no future for them. In my conference, a group of ministers are looking into the idea of doing away with superintendents, because the system costs so much to maintain. In Korea, the superintendents have their local church bases and the smaller district.

Griffith: It's closer to the New Testament model.

Cho: And what's wrong with that? The local church bears the burden of a top-heavy system with all these apportionments. If people want to rebel, I understand why.

Russell: I think part of the reason for that is that we have divorced what we give to the total church from our mission. It's no longer our mission, it's a tax, it's a franchise that we have to pay in order to operate on this corner. We don't see it as a way to live out the mission and purpose in the life of the church.

Garcia: One of the things that is happening far too often is that bishops and superintendents do not really take time to
know congregations, to know people, to spend time in knowing who those folk are. And bishops may know clergy—or they may not! I heard one bishop say in jest that now that the conference had a pictorial directory, he would know whom he was appointing. But it was a fact: he didn’t know because he hadn’t taken the time. Now that I’m in an appointment beyond the local church, we have this annual meeting with the bishop. But it’s a lunch meeting, and it’s optional, and maybe four out of twenty ABLC’s show up. We have around twenty people in that category. But if itineracy as we know it is going to have value, it will require that those who are in position to fix the appointments know who they are dealing with, both congregations and pastors.

Del Pino: Let’s put that into context. Even since 1968, this whole denomination has been in a frenzy of restructuring. I know it is all intended for the good. All these structures have to be maintained correctly, so we spend time and energy watching each other. I’m not saying let’s throw out accountability. But United Methodists don’t trust each other, and they don’t have a sense of the common good beyond their own local church. It’s a variation on the idea that when my kids are not in school, why should I support public education? The task of oversight in this church takes place in an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion. The fact is we select bishops in the wrong way, and we overload district superintendents with in-terminable administrative duties.

Russell: The fact is that in the Discipline there’s very little about the work of the bishop and lots about the work of the superintendent. You’re right. It is by and large defined as an administrative office. But when the bishop called me and asked me to be a superintendent, his first criteria was preaching skill. That’s what he wanted. Someone who was seen as a preacher in the conference.

McArthur: If our organization runs us instead of the other way around, then the work of the D.S. will continue to proliferate around maintenance. I think that there is some evidence that we will be experiencing increasing pressures to
become more and more parochial in the future. That's unfortunate, because most of our problems, even those outside the church, can only be solved regionally. Think about urban pollution and mass transport. Why can't we get beyond self-interest on this?

Hels: What do you think is the biggest piece of unfinished business in the church when it comes to the itinerant system?

Blum: I think that persons who serve on the Cabinet need to be the very brightest, most committed, and spiritually mature people in the annual conference, so that they can exercise a true leadership role with regard to itineracy. We need to sense that there is a real God-given authority at work in our appointive system, and not simply that things are being managed.

Harnish: It seems like in all we've talked about we keep coming back to the need for a sense of mission. We need the Holy Spirit to break in and give us a new shared vision of what we're about and where we're headed. Then issues of deployment might not be quite as awkward and difficult, because people would be more willing to go where they were needed in order to accomplish that vision.

Cho: I think that the next step is you have to really look into the character and vision of those who are exercising the superintending authority of the annual conferences. We need to have people with vision, not just people who can maintain the status quo.

Walter: I am concerned that we have, in our annual conferences and, I think, for the general church almost tried to divest the bishop and the cabinet of any kind of opportunity to be leaders in the annual conference. And if we can free the superintendents and bishops to be preachers, teachers, and spiritual leaders in an annual conference, I think it would be helpful to us.

Del Pino: I think that an outstanding issue and concern for me would be how we go about articulating the call for conversion for individuals in our communities of faith, including pastors, candidates, and those who supervise.
Treese: This panel has added evidence to my belief that itineracy has a real future and much potential in our church. But that future and potential depends mightily on several important factors. It needs a covenant theology to sustain it. It needs a mission to serve. And it must have certain assumptions in place, one of which is a clear understanding of the obligations and responsibilities of itineracy. The supervisors of our system must make that understood at every checkpoint. The other assumption is that we must not expect it to take away the responsibility to make our own personal, family, and career decisions. To do that disables the system. There is so much that I think has to be worked out by individuals and by families. Finally, if we want a good, flexible system in the future, we must stop using it as a therapeutic system to deal with ineffective and incompetent pastors. There are other ways—humane ways—available to deal with them. But overall, this is what I think about the itineracy: it is not a good system. It’s just better than any other system that we know.
Fundamentalism—
A Challenge to the Church

James Barr

Fundamentalism is not a new thing. In its most familiar form it has been with us for a century or so, and before that it had a long prehistory out of which its modern form emerged. So, we might say, most of us have plenty of experience of it and how it works. And it is not surprising that it has survived and continued to gain new adherents. What is new about fundamentalism, however, is the fact that it may be coming to be the main problem for religion, the most serious and difficult challenge to the churches in our time and in the coming hundred years or so. It is not just a marginal difficulty affecting only a limited few, but a worldwide problem, affecting not only Christianity but many different religions.

Though the word "fundamentalism" was coined to designate a particular form of narrow and sectarian Protestantism, the phenomenon can now be clearly seen to be a large-scale one, supported by literally millions of people. At the same time it is a small-scale problem, for it affects individuals in their inner spiritual struggles, it tears families apart, it is the center of violent emotional reactions.

And yet it cannot be said that the churches have yet taken stock of the situation in this regard. People are aware of the problem but do not know how to grasp it, and our modern theologies have failed to give a lead in the matter. Many of our
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scholars seem to think that the opinions of fundamentalists lie beneath their own intellectual level, and the populist dialogical style of fundamentalist rhetoric is one with which they cannot cope. But this lofty stance cannot continue much longer. As a world problem, fundamentalism is becoming just too large to be ignored; and, quite apart from what church leaders and theologians may think, a flood of books and articles by historians, sociologists, and literary critics, as well as by biblical scholars and theologians, is beginning to throw light on the subject. Let me refer to one particular piece of work, the Fundamentalist Project centered in the University of Chicago, which is engaged in a five-year study and will produce five volumes on the subject from every angle, with specialists from every continent and concerned with every religion and every culture.

The Power of Fundamentalism

FOR US IN THE CHURCHES, fundamentalism presents problems on two different fronts. One is internal and the other is external. The internal one lies within the churches. Why is fundamentalism so powerful nowadays? Why is it apparently growing in influence and success? Why do people take their image of Christianity, as they think it ought to be, so largely from the fundamentalist style of living and talking? What can the churches say or do that might balance the attraction of the fundamentalist approach? The external problem is this: fundamentalism within Protestant Christianity is to most of us a familiar enough phenomenon. We know roughly what it is like, we know how fundamentalists talk and we have some experience of their impact on church life. But what relation do these Protestant fundamentalists have to the powerful currents so visible in other religions? Is there something similar in certain trends of the Roman Catholic church? What about fundamentalism in Jewish life, or the almost universal fundamentalism of Islam, most aptly exemplified in the sweeping power of the Shiite form of that religion? Perhaps there is
something comparable in the religions of India and the Far
East. Is fundamentalism of some kind a universal phenomenon
of human nature? Is the familiar Christian Protestant fun­
damentalism of the southeastern United States only a local
variant of something going on all over the world? And, whether
here or in other lands, what impact is this "natural fundamen­
talism," possibly innate in a great variety of peoples and cul­
tures, likely to have on matters of public policy: on questions of
health and medicine, on the chances for the development of
democracy, on the position of women in society, and on the
evaluation of life and death, the likelihood of peace and war?
Fundamentalism, then, today is not only a challenge to the
church, it is a challenge to society also; and the church has to
look at it in both aspects.

Fundamentalism Described

THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME characteristic features of fun­
damentalism, seen on the widest scale. Firstly we may name
the attachment to a central symbol, and in the most familiar
forms of fundamentalism that symbol is a book: the Bible, the
Qur'an, also (if you count political fundamentalism) the Red
Book, the Thoughts of Chairman Mao. The book is central and
infallible, all truth flows from it, everything depends on it. In
all forms of Christianity the Bible is regarded as holy, as a
communication from God, as the fundamental resource for
teaching and doctrine. But in fundamentalism this fact, which
is general in our religion, is elevated and made into the ab­
solutely dominant factor: belief in the authority of scripture is
the ultimate controlling agency, and unless you have it and
have it clearly all the other realities become vain.

Now essential to fundamentalism is that the truth is non­
egotiable. It is not a matter of discussion under the rules of
justice or free speech. The essence of religion is not something
that has to be worked out through consultation with others.
The fundamentalist knows the truth. He or she may be a quite
ignorant person in other regards, but in the ultimate religious
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questions he or she knows where the answer lies, and knows what the answer is. Fundamentalists have an answer to everything: nothing is more familiar in our experience of Christianity than this fact. And the fact that one book contains all the ultimate truth makes it easier to have an answer to everything. Because truth is nonnegotiable, fundamentalists cannot seriously cooperate with others of the same religion. Relations with others, even within the same religion, are normally polemical.

Another feature that goes along with this is militancy. While some fundamentalism is quietist, content to follow its own principles, not mixing with others, most fundamentalism is militant: it wants to convert, to change others to its own opinions. Evangelism is the core activity of fundamentalism and the great individual evangelist is its hero. Speaking at least of Christian fundamentalism, its real militancy is directed against other kinds of Christians, or people who are only vaguely Christian. Thus most of the converts to fundamentalist Christianity come from within the vaguely Christian culture.

This militancy can also take the form that we may call restorationist. That is to say, fundamentalism wants to restore the world to a state which it has been in, or a state which the fundamentalist believes it has been in, at some time in the past. Thus fundamentalism is characteristically anti-modern. It may use modern means, like television, it may find a place for modern ideas, such as psychology, but deeper down it wants to restore an older world. And this shows itself when, as is very much the case in our times, fundamentalism becomes politically active. It may seek, for instance, to restore a world in which everyone had to do, very simply, what God required of them, a world in which human schemes and ideas about improvement of the world, apart from fundamentalist evangelism, would not have a place.

Now the militancy of fundamentalist religion depends on certain forms of operation. One of these is agreement among the members. They have to think the same thing. The revival campaign depends on the assumption that all those taking part
are basically agreed; if there are disagreements, and there may be many, they can be put aside or hidden for practical purposes. It's noticeable among some of the fundamentalisms of modern times how all the people look alike, dress alike, make the same gestures: the Red Guards, the Shiites in Iran—the unity of style and mind seems to give strength.

And this is important, because fundamentalism, in the forms that are most conspicuous and important, is a mass movement. It is not an affair of a tiny group hidden away somewhere: today it is working in literally many millions. And for this purpose there needs to be a certain simplicity of ideas. All fundamentalisms have many ramifications, and are very complicated when you try to go into all the questions; but there tends to be some one central symbol that is the essence of the confession of the total movement. In Protestant fundamentalism it is the inspiration and total infallibility of the Bible. For this you don't have to have worked through all the problems, considered all the arguments, gone into the history of the matter; you don't need even to have read the Bible all through. No, all you need is to be sure that this simple truth, that of the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible, is absolute and beyond doubt. And that's how it works.

If you ask the question, so often put to me, why it is that fundamentalism seems to work so well and succeed so well, I've given you part of the answer. It is a form of religion that has a powerful mass appeal and is able to get large numbers of people working personally, devotedly, and militantly, in its favor. It isn't a religion where a small professional class, the clergy or the priesthood, alone can do the work, where all questions have to be referred to the experts; rather, it is one where the large constituency can be mobilized to work, to give, to speak, to live, to exercise pressure on others, according to the requirements of fundamentalist society. That is one of the secrets of its success.

Psychologically, and more personally, the other side of the same coin is the certainty that fundamentalists feel they enjoy, and which they make very plain to other people. Religion
Fundamentalism should not be shadowed by doubt or uncertainty. The truth is known, why should one hesitate about it? But, looked at more carefully, one may wonder if this certainty is not itself a consequence of doubt, a reaction to a feeling that faith is slipping away. It is not an accident that many forms of fundamentalism have their origin in the time when a religious tradition was splitting, was becoming disrupted. Thus the real enemy, for most fundamentalists, is not the heathen, the distant people, not even the atheists and irreligious: it is those who claim to belong to the same religion but differ from the fundamentalists. The Shia arose from a traumatic split in Islam, the trauma of the Reformation still lies at the back of much Protestant fundamentalism, and one major catalyst of modern fundamentalism was the feeling that biblical criticism was damaging the ultimate citadel of faith. Fundamentalism is thus not a different religion, it is a force that depends upon splits within existing religions and builds upon these splits.

Fundamentalism and the Church

Now, if all this is a challenge to the church, what are we to say that may offer some suggestions about what to do about it? It isn't easy to offer any clear and simple plan of what may be done to face the realities of fundamentalism. One or two indications have been given already. The first is to recognize that this is a major problem or challenge, which has to be faced and studied with all the intellectual and spiritual resources that the churches can deploy. One of the good signs of the present time lies in the rising pace of academic attention to the question.

The second major need is for clear command of the Bible. Fundamentalists persuade people through the use of the Bible and the endless quoting of it because people do not know the Bible very well. Very few of those who have been well trained in biblical studies and have studied theology become fundamentalists—probably none at all. Among students and other people trained in the subject the movement is all away from
fundamentalism. Often it was fundamentalism that brought them into the subject, but the subject itself soon moves them away from it. When modern study of the Bible began, the churches were too afraid to face the questions that arose. The minister agonized over them in his study, but he did not share them with his people. The result is that, a hundred years later, we have a widespread Christian laity that has less control of the Bible than was possessed a century ago, and young men and women enter courses for the ministry having no more readiness to face modern Bible study than their predecessors possessed a hundred years ago.

The churches need to show the fundamentalist public that they, and the scholarship with which they work, are truly deeply involved in the Bible, are confident in its authority, and are steeped in a rich tradition of its interpretation. That tradition is far more genuine than the unhistorical, often artificial, often contradictory and ultimately sectarian interpretation that fundamentalism depends upon to achieve its appearance of consistency. But in order to do this the ministry should lighten the very heavy burden which it has to bear by relying much more heavily upon the Bible for its preaching, by making use of the Bible so that everyone can see how much we use it. On the other side the churches should take their entire people into their confidence by sharing with them the fullness of knowledge about the Scriptures and their background.

In the last resort there are two irresistible arguments against the way fundamentalists handle Scripture: firstly, there is no authority of the Bible unless there is freedom in the interpretation of the Bible. By denying the freedom of scholarly interpretation, fundamentalism is insisting on its own interpretation and making that interpretation, rather than the Bible itself, into the final authority. By doing so it undermines the very authority of Scripture which it seeks to uphold. Secondly the reliance of fundamentalism on the infallibility of the Bible is an illusion. For, even if the Bible is infallible, it still does not provide unique support for the fundamentalist kind of religion. An infallible Bible can still point in a Catholic direc-
tion, it can point in a moderate, liberal direction, it can point in a socially liberationist direction, it can point in a unitarian, universalist direction. Thus, even if seen from the viewpoint of fundamentalism itself, reliance on biblical infallibility is an illusion. But the churches have to make more express their reliance on the Bible: not on some particular theory of Scripture, but on the reality of Scripture itself.

Experience in the variety of religious viewpoints within Christianity has made one thing clear to me: that the Bible is curiously weak as a force to convince people and form their beliefs. What people really believe in, generally, is a fairly simple set of dogmatic principles that they have been taught or that they have inherited from someone at some time. What they know about the Bible, they fit into the framework of these beliefs. Only with the greatest difficulty can people come to accept that the Bible does not, after all, teach what they themselves have always believed.

Where then does this lead us? It means that, even where the Bible is the final authority, the actual force that constrains people's understanding is normally doctrinal—in fundamentalism as in other forms of Christianity. The church needs therefore to be doctrinally conscious, so that its own framework of belief is constantly re-clarified, related to the present-day needs and understandings of people, and related to the Bible itself with reference to the way in which scholarship handles the Bible. The problems of fundamentalism can never be fully dealt with by arguing on the basis of the Bible itself; for one has to show not only that the Bible means something different from what fundamentalists believe, but also that from it there can grow a doctrinal clarity and luminosity which greatly surpasses in quality all that fundamentalism can offer.

But this also calls for yet a further amplification. I have noted how fundamentalism seeks to establish a foundation in the past, in the way things used to be, and sometimes also seeks to restore things as they were in that far-off time. It looks, therefore, as if it was a historical question, a question of knowing how things used to be. But fundamentalists are seldom historically
conscious; the world when things were better is a world they imagine. Apart from the very occasional and exceptionally historically-conscious fundamentalist, they don't know anything about it. Their world-view is anachronistic—the situations and ideas that they read back into the past are based on their own times. Their own principle, that the Bible alone is the source of truth, takes its revenge in that they don't read about past history of the church or the way in which doctrine has developed. On the whole the Protestant churches have neglected this; but the time may now have come when, faced with the power of fundamentalism, an increased attention to the history of the church and its doctrines will be required.

Lastly, the central problem will always be, as it has been since fundamentalism began, one of communication. As I said, fundamentalists consider truth to be nonnegotiable. Central to their way of life is the setting up of barriers which will prevent the hearing of opinions, the reading of books, the meeting of persons, that will present a different point of view. These barriers are there in the social organization of fundamentalist life, its societies, its groups, its press; and they are there psychologically, in the difficulty the individual has in opening his or her mind to any alternative version of Christianity or any alternative understanding of the Bible. I write books about fundamentalism, but I know that very few fundamentalists will read them. If I go to a campus to talk in a situation where fundamentalism is a problem, it is likely that no fundamentalists—or one or two isolated persons—will come to the meeting, and that is how it usually turns out.

On the whole fundamentalism follows a strategy that is both aggressive and cowardly. They don't want to discuss unless they can win. With people whose faith is weak and whose knowledge of the Bible is slight, they use the Bible as a weapon to overcome; but if you really know the Bible, and have a solid viewpoint to put forward, then they don't want to meet you. That is why it is very much a task and a challenge for the church: it isn't something that the scholars and theologians can perform, even if they wanted to do it. But everyone in the church can do
something. And Methodism, with its great tradition of lay exposition and of popular involvement, can do an outstanding service to all the churches of the world.

Bibliography


The modern Western encounter with Muslims may be characterized by three major trends. Beginning in the early 19th century, Western Christian missionaries were sent to Muslim countries, supported by a sense of optimism about the sheer number of potential Christian converts. The second trend, beginning in the late 19th century, is the study of Islam in Western universities as one branch of what has been called Oriental Studies. At first, this study was motivated by a sense of confidence in the Western ability, as a child of the Enlightenment, to understand Islam with a detached, rational perspective. After the collapse of the European colonial empires, however, Western guilt became a powerful motivating force behind the academic study of Islam. The third major trend is Muslim-Christian dialogue. In the post-World War II period, primarily in Western Europe, dialogue became the main channel for discharging a lingering Western guilt over the abuses of colonialism and for stirring Christian repentance at having denigrated Muslim religious views and practices.

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The shift to dialogue, while the most recent, is also the most painful stage in the Western encounter with Muslims. Both Christian mission and Western orientalism were buoyed by a sense of optimism: missionaries and academics anticipated success, whether it was based on premillennialism or on social Darwinism. By contrast, the shift to dialogue coincided with a Western liberal pessimism about the value of religion in general and Christianity in particular. In this perspective, religion amounted to no more than a phase in the ongoing human enterprise. Western theologians, for the most part Protestant, engaged in dialogue in an attempt to transcend religious differences, which were seen as vestiges of a less enlightened mode of being.

Dialogue and Western Secularity

However, the West's attitude was not necessarily shared by the rest of the world. By using dialogue to overcome religion, the West in its liberal phase once again intruded on other people's religious inheritance. How did it accomplish this? Christian liberals, strongly influenced by Western secular philosophical values, had the habit of taking liberties with their own declining church. This hardened them towards other religions, leading them to make faulty assumptions on their behalf. But the irony is this: in discounting the affirmations of Christianity, the liberal West constituted itself into the arbiter of all other religious affirmations. Thus, in spite of its widely celebrated decline, Christianity continued to shape liberal interreligious discourse. This dialogue proceeded to ignore the empirical religious situation in favor of ideological assertions. Western anti-religious rationalism constituted itself as the universal paradigm: if non-Christians were consistent they would be convinced of the Western position, and that would validate Western intellectual ascendancy; if they were not, it would show the gap in the West's favor.1

At its simplest, the secular liberal disavowal of religion erects a wall that obstructs all enlightened efforts towards the goal of
global understanding. Religious distinctiveness, and the diversity it fosters, is indispensable to the cause of human solidarity. Allow people their sense of ultimate trust and loyalty and they will most likely reciprocate with gestures of goodwill. It is from the sense of commitment and obligation that dialogue and the other forms of mutual encounter arise, making conversation meaningful rather than superfluous. As the African proverb has it, a one-legged person does not dance. Interreligious dialogue without distinctive claims based on ultimate truth is a lame creature indeed.

In spite of indubitable evidence of a global religious revival, the modern secular West is set on a relentlessly antireligious course, intending to sweep the rest of the world into the wasteland of a religionless world. Abandoning distinctive Christian claims, however, diminishes from the total pool of religious traditions and restricts the scope of diversity. It also puts pressure on others to do likewise, drawing them into a circle of mutual likemindedness. The time may be right to urge a different kind of pluralism in which neither the Muslim nor the Christian should be required to disown his or her particularity as a precondition for dialogue.

A New Model for Mission

In order to turn this one-sidedness, we need to look at the conciliatory work of Kenneth Cragg. In the second edition of his epochmaking book, The Call of the Minaret, Kenneth Cragg invites us to take a fresh view of mission, seeing it not as the insensitive imposition of Western Christianity or Western culture on others but as the crucible for challenging the Western cultural monopoly on Christianity. In this connection, he writes, "The Gospel as such has no native country . . . Christ belongs to us only because he belongs to all."

Cragg suggests that faithfulness in mission constitutes an important safeguard against the "vulgar universalizing" of Western culture. Mission brings us within range of others besides ourselves. As long as we are prepared to communicate
to others an "account for the hope that lies in us" (1 Pet. 3:5), we will remain within striking range, so to speak, of new discoveries and fresh possibilities. Mission is—and has always been—Christianity's credibility option. It is not simply that Christians perpetuated Western mistakes in mission (although they did that, and worse) as that the church came to its Pentecostal fulfillment in an unprecedented variety of tongues and cultures. It is not uniformity so much as diversity and particularity that mission promoted.

More than any other single factor, it is the vernacular Scriptures that have held together the vivid array of nationalities and cultures that comprise non-Western Christianity today. The translation of the Bible into indigenous languages has effectively displaced European languages and the cultural traditions they enshrined. Furthermore, it established a momentous source for indigenous self-understanding: not only was it a medium for the transmission of Christianity; it also supplied a means for evaluating Western influences. The local appropriation of the message of missions thus helped to mitigate the disruptive effects of overseas Western commercial and political exploitation. It is, therefore, a legitimate question whether Western missions, in thus providing the means wherewith indigenous societies might defend themselves, did not also profoundly alter the self-image of the Western church.

The common charge that Christian mission was Western cultural imperialism, or that witness was only a cover for Western arrogance and intolerance, needs seriously to be qualified. Cragg contends, on the contrary, that there is no better challenge to Western cultural attitudes than exposure to Muslim claims and affirmations. Furthermore, it is the Christian obligation to Christ that brings the Christian within range of that exposure. And what holds true for the Christian is equally true for the Muslim; without that which distinguishes the Muslim as a Muslim the call to witness as a Muslim is meaningless, and encounter with others unnecessary.
It is necessary to unpack the many issues Cragg raises by his comparative observations. First, it is clear that no one starts from an absolutely neutral point of view. It is not given to us as human beings to occupy a universally objective position, one that transcends human particularity. Whatever the claims and counterclaims, however we affirm or renounce our tradition or other people’s, or whatever our fruit-salad strategy towards religious differences, we are always and inevitably having to do with specific bits and pieces that combine in a given situation for certain individuals and groups.

Therefore, whether we do simple or sophisticated analysis of religious claims, and, even if we postpone thinking about them; we remain rooted in space and time. The ground from which we proceed remains fixed. Consequently, our defense of universal truths as Christians and Muslims brings our own particularities into the service of universal obligation. For Christians the danger is to distill the truth of the incarnation as having only anthropological status, while for Muslims it is to use divine transcendence to discount human initiative. In the Christian case a religious premise would be employed for a this-worldly end, while in the Muslim case it would be employed to deny any humanistic end. Where Christians derive non-religious consequences from religious premises, Muslims make religious doctrine depend on human enforcement, though not human initiative. Christians and Muslims differ in their attitudes towards vernacular cultures, but both imply that culture is a common mediatory channel for religion.

The Value of Particularity

In the past we have held that particularity condemns us to at least two hard, unfruitful choices: one that cripples us with a one-legged view of God’s intention, and the other that denies the value or point of dialogue. I believe that these two choices are inadequate for understanding the full potential of particularity since they merely repeat a version of the one-sidedness we identified in Western liberalism.
Let me spell out in more detail the implications of the criticism of particularity. There is first the view that particularity conflicts with human solidarity, that those who advocate it also deny the oneness of the human family, and that particularity promotes sectarianism rather than pluralism. In fact, this is a misunderstanding of particularity that should be distinguished from the ideology of exclusivism, also called particularism. Particularity, on the other hand, refers to the specificity and concreteness of the human situation. Human beings are not disembodied, free-floating spirits, unattached to time and place. All that we know, claim, feel, observe and have is grounded in distinctive and particular ways of being human. There is no such thing as Miss or Mr. Universal Humanity. We all bear particular names, speak particular languages, live in particular places, and have particular tastes (and distastes). The general science of anatomical study, for all its value, can reveal nothing of that rich particularity. The category of *homo sapiens* is at heart a social classification.

Religion fits into that scheme of particularity. In its detailed prescriptions, its general teachings, its rules of liturgy and observance, and the powerful currents of loyalty it stirs in our beings, religion reflects and promotes human diversity and particularity as geometry builds from the void the fluid curves and sharp, detailed angles that give form and shape to particular figures. The Muslim is a Muslim because Islam creates a distinctive identity different from that of the Buddhist, the Hindu, the Jew, the Marxist, the nationalist, and, of course, the Christian. Without the distinction, there can be no identity, and without identity there is no basis for the defense involved in witness, or for dialogue. And without that distinction, too, we run the risk of "the vulgar universalizing" of our particularity about which Cragg warns.

If Christians offer to Muslims a religious discount of Christianity because they want to take Muslims seriously, for example, then they must *either* imply a similar move for Muslims, which would be just a version of Christian unilateralism, or else concede the truth of Muslim claims, which leaves them with
conversion as the only viable option. In either case, whether it is Christian unilateralism or conversion to Islam, Christians will only have traded in different versions of one-sidedness rather than advanced the cause of genuine dialogue.

The other possibility, of saying that a Muslim’s religion is his or her business, may appear to leave the Muslim safely alone but in fact rejects beforehand Islam’s own claim to universal attention. Of course, Islam is the business of the Muslim so far as responsibility for it goes, but it is a responsibility that includes witness and mission. We cannot restrict Islam to Muslims or Christianity to Christians without reducing religion to one-sided mutual indifference. An African proverb says that when a dead leaf falls, its neighbor does not laugh, for the fate that befalls it is reserved for its neighbor, too.

Some people have sought to escape these stark choices by opting for selective pluralism. They pick and choose among various religious teachings and claim the result as containing all that is best and vital in religion. Yet even that piece of bold and generous syncretism scarcely resolves the difficulty. If you take elements from two religions, let us say, and merge them, you create a third which differs from the other two in its particular form and style. But you would have thus incurred the additional hazard of having created by poaching a third religion believed now to be superior to the others, a form of one-sidedness that defeats the whole purpose of pluralism. I believe that this approach is the hidden agenda of much of what passes for comparative religion and the philosophy of religion.

We should not confuse particularism with particularity for the same reasons that we must hold together dialogue and witness in interreligious encounter. If as a Muslim, for example, you really do not believe that Islam demands conviction in you and others, then dialogue is a tedious diversion, and so, in fact, is the whole edifice of Islam. Yet if you feel that dialogue is important enough to relinquish the distinctiveness of religious claims, then you have made dialogue the new source of overriding claims on you, and dialogue itself judges what is true or false in religion. For example, we might now encourage dialogue
because it promotes human solidarity and religious pluralism, believing that those values are greater than any other religious claim, but we would not have escaped the exclusive one-sidedness even of those values. We would thus recall the particularity of religious development and thus would merely have retraced the circle. Or we may have done worse by creating an illusory substitute for religion.

Similar grounds persist with the Christian interest in dialogue: if Christ’s claims on us are not valid, then dialogue with Muslims in the name of Christianity is a subterfuge, and that is a hollow foundation for any meaningful conversation. If we claim that there are other urgent reasons why we must engage in dialogue with Muslims, we imply the need for similar urgent reasons for Muslims, if not at the beginning, then hopefully before or at the end of our meeting. Yet the question will not go away: why should we make “our more urgent reasons” grounds for a more secure commitment than the claims of Christ? Why should conviction in mutual trust and tolerance be worth it if, for the Christian, it requires denying that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself”? If the name means anything at all, then we have a responsibility for it; and if it does not, then we do not bear it. Thus, religious particularity involves an identity and a responsibility for such identity. Of course, it matters how and by what means that responsibility is discharged, which explains why dialogue and witness constitute an important challenge, being two sides of the same coin. Reticence about who and what we are is not a hopeful sign of human maturity, especially since we fill the silence with unexposed prejudice. “Worse than silences,” Cragg admonishes, “are the vetoes we invoke against each other. Dialogue and witness go together, and they balance and enhance each other. The responsibility for witness incurs that of dialogue, and vice-versa: I can listen because I may also speak, and the other persons know because their listening and my speaking, and vice-versa, are intertwined. They who take Christ are in a state of perpetual discovery. And the discoveries they make are made through the discoveries they enable.”
All this is of pointed concern for Muslim-Christian dialogue. The separate claims of Muslims and Christians to the obligation for mission and witness have often led to stalemate and intolerance. The divisive nature of talk about mission and witness appears to justify the tactic of avoiding these tough issues. After all, profound misgiving in the West about this question has created the false combat of liberal humanists and conservative evangelicals: the former reject witness and thus make dialogue pointless, while the latter defend witness but consider dialogue surrender, or even a betrayal. When it comes to Muslim-Christian dialogue, liberals may think it a good thing to suggest to Muslims that they have an adequate conception of Christ, a Christ emptied of much of his orthodox identity; and conservative evangelicals may feel exclusive about their own witness to Christ without coming to grips with Islamic notions of finality. Thus, liberals and conservatives would have merely cooked each other's goose. Somewhere in the middle ground we have to find a way to move beyond religious unilateralism.

Witness and Dialogue: the Critical Frontier

Several sharp questions indicate the nature of the problem we face. If Muslims are obliged to witness about their faith to non-Muslims, does it not mean that non-Muslims may also speak about Islam? Conversely, if Christians wish to convince others of the truth of Christianity, does it not stand to reason that others can give an account of the gospel in a way that indicates their own understanding? In other words, witness implies the capacity for mutual comprehension and with that the basis for accepting the integrity of the other even where disagreements exist. In our very particularities we have reason for respecting each other. Retreat from particularity unravels all the interlacing patterns of human mutuality, stripping it of coherence and comprehension. No abstract formula can be an adequate substitute for human or religious solidarity, especially since such formulas are themselves the extrapolations of one side or the other.
We must press further. If the non-Muslim or the non-Christian can speak to and of the other side, as obviously occurs in witness and dialogue, then he or she can speak for it as well. In other words, dialogue and witness assume a capacity for entering someone else's experience not just to find what is similar but to see the distinctiveness. Particularity thus implies responsibility for our differences. Therefore, Muslims may justly look to Christians for partnership in projects of Islamic witness, and vice versa. Muslim eagerness to witness to the truths of Islam should admit collaboration with Christians as Christians, and vice-versa. That implies a similar degree of commitment in Christians to the claims of the gospel and a similar commitment of Muslims to the claims of Islam. It is not simply that Muslims wish to set out the facts about Islam and leave the matter there but that setting out the facts commences the witness for which dialogue exists as counterpart. Ultimately, the response sought is submission to God as Islam frames it. Yet in a pluralistic context, religious propagation has often to be content with less than full conversion, and Muslims and Christians need to recognize the freedom of people actively not to be Muslims and Christians. It means, for example, that non-religious persons may speak searchingly enough about religious claims to require serious rethinking by religious people. To that extent even non-religious outsiders may speak to the essential matters of religion. Obviously, there are areas of complexity: a measure of sympathy is required for any deep comprehension, but any religion that promotes itself through commendation invites and justifies the role of external interlocutors. Islam cannot escape this any more than Christianity. And, for what it is worth, are we not ourselves, in terms of any notional universality, "outsiders" to God, although we claim to possess the message?

Thus our respective religious claims bind us to each other, not simply in the fortuitous circumstance that we wish to convert each other (which in any case only God can do) but in the profound sense that our respective distinctiveness is constitutive of our truth-experience. It turns out that what we have
in common is our participation in the enterprise of God through the particularity of time, place and language, so that even our universal claims will evaporate as illusory if we cut the ground from under ourselves or each other. The common challenge in Islam and Christianity to witness is also a challenge to participation, to be involved in "a spiritual transaction as well as a physical adjacency." We need to be aware of the fact that all religious claims are intended for human custody even where they direct us to transcendent ends. As a result, religion schematizes such claims in human terms. Just as we should be careful not to confuse God's terms with our terms, so we must recognize it is our carefulness that is doing duty for God. It is, therefore, impossible to separate witness to God's truth from the human initiative of dialogue. Thus we proclaim the truth as criterion also of dialogue. It is, for that very reason, a hazardous undertaking, for it is easy to play God to others and do so from no more an exalted position than the wish to see our particular cultural forms predominate. If we say that persons must believe in God by first believing our testimony about God, have we not made divine "believability" dependent on human "believability"? And can we do this without taking God's place? That is to say, can we do this without absolutizing the medium of our commendation? I believe, in fact, the claims of Christianity for the Christian and those of Islam for the Muslim should help check the tendency to assume that ours is the only vehicle, a view that can only trample on others.

If we assume that it is valid for outsiders to form an accurate enough impression of our religion to give or withhold their assent, then it follows that what Christians say about Islam and what Muslims say about Christianity matters enormously. We cannot exclude outsider interest in our affairs without disqualifying those affairs from having a claim on others. And religious exclusiveness may reassure a jealous regard, but it will also invite negative dismissal.
MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

**Mutual Criticism**

In fact, Muslims and Christians have spoken about each other, sometimes with a striking lack of inhibition. Muslim writers, for example, have repeated the traditional strictures against Christianity and diagnosed what they see as Christianity's inherent flaws. They have gone on to deride the religion in its Western setting, alleging ills in Western society that are imputed to the church's failure. In his book, *Social Justice in Islam*, Sayyid Qutb denounced Christianity as inherently "unable except by intrigue to compete with the social and economic systems which are ever developing, because it has no essential philosophy of actual, practical life." Summarizing the burden of the dismissal of Christianity made by modern Muslim writers, Cragg writes that in their eyes

the Christian Church is incurably compromised with hypocrisy and vested interest. The Christian ethic is vague, impractical, otherworldly. It has set impossible standards of moral purity—and every form of corruption, prostitution, and vice has flourished behind its idealist facade. Better the sound, moderate, feasible sanity of Islam, with its recognition of the weaknesses and limits of human nature, than the futile idealism and real shame of Christian society. Christian history, likewise, is a sordid record of compromise and bigotry, broadening out into the proliferating sins and scandals of Western civilization. Christianity is jejune, effete, misguided, and discredited. Its origins are erroneous, its story tarnished, and its energies spent.

The Muslim impatience with Christianity may sometimes lead to a sharp mocking and derisive tone. One modern Muslim author, Khalil Gauba, in his book *Prophet of the Desert* comments on Christ as follows:

Poor Jesus Christ expressed the noblest sentiments on charity and forgiveness; thus upon the Cross, persecuted and crucified, he forgave his enemies—"They know not what they
do.' But it was never in Christ's good fortune to have his enemies reduced to impotence before him.¹²

In the sectarian Ahmadiyya Muslim Movement this derision of Christ is carried to extreme limits. According to Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya, the cry of Jesus on the Cross was cowardly and pathetic, even ignominious; and there are even aspersions on his moral character on a scale to rival The Satanic Verses. Yet, as Cragg rightly observes, "We must avoid the easy temptation to vindication....Assertions such as this [are] not overcome by [their] like....Here are not arguments to be refuted; here is a tragedy to be redeemed. What matters is not that Muslims have thought ill of Christianity but that they have misread the Christ."¹³ In fact, we may say that what matters is that Muslims demonstrate by their criticism the unflattering limits of religious one-sidedness, a reminder that outsiders are tempted to quick judgments, and for that reason should learn in dialogue the value of mutual correction and commendation. Religious particularity is not incitement to aggression but the call to courage under patience. At any rate, if it turns out that even "outsidedness" is no disqualification from criticism, then it becomes clear that retreat is not a viable option, and consequently it is all the more urgent that our judgments be grounded in mutual penetration of each other's testimony and intention, including a patient regard for the hard facts adorned with the soft virtues of faith, devotion, and hallowed memory. For after all, whether we claim universality for ourselves and particularity for others, or vice-versa, whether we defer to others or ignore them, we are all marked by the common paradox of human contingency and divine obligation. Consequently, Christian witness, and its Islamic rejoinder, or Muslim witness and its mutual Christian response, cannot retreat into stalemate or recrimination.

In that and other senses Muslims and Christians stand together. (It is a little unfortunate to use the metaphor of standing together, with its combative notion and that of closing ranks against others. It might be truer to speak instead of
surrendering together, of a humble submission in the divine presence. But let that pass.) Both Islam and Christianity began and expanded as religions addressed to outsiders. The Qurʾān repeatedly calls nonbelievers to ponder its message: to consider, to remember, to reflect, to observe, to bring to mind, to pay attention to, to attend to the signs of God, all that so thinking persons might mend their ways and turn to the Lord. We would have a rather emaciated and an invalid Qurʾān were we to expunge from it all the passages addressed to non-Muslims. The book rings with the accent of outsiders and in parts sweeps forward with a rehearsal of objections to itself. Mā zannikum bi-Rabb al-ʿAlamin? “What do you suppose of the Lord of the worlds?” (xxxvii: 87) In that question the Qurʾān invites its hearers to ponder and reflect on who God is, not the God of abstract logic but the God who fashioned the world and now invites our attention. Rather than assume our answer, the Qurʾān formulates the question and leaves the final issue to us. In that sense Islam is the question that demands our answers, although more often than not we think Islam is the answer that removes our questions.¹⁴

Even when it pronounces on the quality of the response human beings give to its message, the Qurʾān may criticize inadequate or misdirected human response but seldom the need or responsibility for the response. In several passages this point is made clear: Mā qadarū Allāha ḥaqqa qadrihi,¹⁸ “They did not esteem God as He should be esteemed,” or “They did not measure God by God’s own true measure.” In other words, God’s criteria (ḥaqqa qadrihi) are far more exacting than ordinary human standards, although clearly we are not thereby excluded from God’s standards. The rigorous thinking we must do with reference to the things of God reminds us that retreat is not our choice nor indifference our calling. The Qurʾān is loud and clear about the duty of attentiveness lest we incur the offence of “unthinking” heedlessness, ghafalah. We can see from all this that had the Qurʾān been addressed only to bona fide Muslims then it would have been a very different sort of book.
There is a further step to be taken in the matter of right understanding, and that is clarity about what we are urged to respond to. How do we know unless we are told? And how can we be told unless we can take it in? That immediately suggests that the message bearer has to assume a measure of integrity in the hearer, so that the "outsider" is, as it were, privy to the truth before it is announced! It is for the sake of outsiders that prophets tune their senses and refine their spirits in order to deliver into their hands the word that began with God and in God. And so the prophet Moses, like Isaiah after him, prays, "Loose the knot from my tongue that they may understand what I say."\textsuperscript{10}

Religious people, of course, are well practiced at putting themselves in the right, and thus beyond the range of the censure of their own Scriptures. If Muslims have done this, they could not have better company than Christians. Right through the Bible there rages a volcanic controversy between God and the people set up to be God's witnesses. The prophets have priests and kings by their ears and assail them with words we normally reserve for our enemies. Yahweh exhausts himself with swearing at his people and then relenting. Jesus despairs of his disciples, their slowness of mind and hardness of spirit, and in turn rebukes, cajoles, threatens, curses, encourages, assures and instructs them. Then the apostles pick up the theme with recalcitrant congregations, wild individuals, and strange customs. We do not get in the Christian Scriptures a tidy, uniform, closed inside track of faith and salvation. Thus, both Christianity and Islam would appear to deny that religion reinforces only creedal uniformity.

One way we have dealt with the issue of outsiders is to convince ourselves, in the way we have failed to convince outsiders, that all religions are similar and that, for example, Muslim claims to finality of truth have their counterpart in Christianity, and Christian differences are also mirrored in Islam. In other words, Islam is a reflection of Christianity, and vice-versa, so that to understand each other we need only to understand ourselves. All such attempts to "include" Islam in
our framework play back to us our own ideas and scales of
familiarity and promote in not-so-subtle form the notion that
we know the truth about others sometimes even better than
they themselves. This view of the matter normatizes our own
particular one-sidedness and invites others to do the same for
theirs. It sets back any prospects for mutual understanding.

Let me be quite clear. If common ground could bring about
the sorely needed rapprochement between Muslims and Chris­tians, then it would be inexcusable not to claim it. In addition,
if Muslims could be convinced that Western depictions of their
world are accurate and persuasive, then we need go no farther.
In other words, if the issue were merely one of offering our
assurance of good intentions for a genuinely harmonious
pluralism to come about, then clearly toil and labor would be
pointless. But it would come at the cost of making Muslims, or
Christians, mere duplicates of the other. Even if we were able
to achieve such unilateral disposition of our differences, it
would be false to one side or the other. But I am afraid we may
be deceiving ourselves by ignoring, and thus perpetuating,
close to twelve hundred years of recalcitrance, ignorance and
mutual recrimination. Something is terribly wrong with our
relationship, so wrong that when our medieval predecessors
saw common ground they traded charges and countercharges
of stealing and unfaithfulness. In the Crusades Christians went
to war against Muslims because the similarities in Islam proved
the Prophet stole from Christians. Muslims for their part
argued that Islam had superseded a defective Christianity.
Common identity was ground for common mistrust. The
secular impatience with such religious obduracy is under­standable, but the secular remedy of ignoring religion al­together creates space for more assertive forms of religion.

Christian-Muslim Reconciliation

FEW SCHOLARS HAVE CARRIED on their shoulders as great a
burden for the centuries of interreligious mistrust, weighed
these matters as judiciously, and explored their historical and
spiritual ramifications as sensitively as has Kenneth Cragg, himself the embodiment of Christian-Muslim reconciliation and the symbol of genuine encounter. Part of his confidence rests in his view that reciprocity is possible and needed from the Muslim side. Many reasons can be adduced for this, including that of challenging Christians to come out of isolation and domestic preoccupation. Long before science and technology shrank our world into a close-knit community of economic interests, our religious traditions postulated a universal God who had dominion over all our affairs. If Western science and technology have replaced such a universal God with the fruits of human ingenuity, then it is a serious question whether, given the particularity of the Western scientific enterprise itself, they represent a greater possibility for trust and neighborliness than that represented by our respective religious claims.

It is no idle speculation to say that science and technology, for all their wonderful gifts to us, have also bequeathed a legacy of divisiveness, destruction, mistrust and exclusiveness little different from religions. Yet religions at least contain the elements of an antidote in the form of self-criticism. In that sense, no religion can be a barracoon and still be genuinely missionary. As Cragg expresses it, "It is only in mission that truth comes to its own crisis—a crisis from which the very thrust of mission can all too easily exempt it. A faith, such as Islam or Christianity, that is denied if not commended cannot be satisfied merely to coexist. Yet only in coexistence can it pursue its commendation." 17 Christians who seek God's will in witness have in effect brought themselves within range of the exacting demands of Jesus' prayer, "not my will, but thine, be done." It is to those higher tasks, deeper scrutinies and larger sympathies that witness brings the Christian. Nothing searches more than the measure by which God esteems us. And for Christians the particular name of Jesus Christ sums it.

Dialogue, therefore, needs to be seen beyond the squint-eyed focus of Western debunking and one-sidedness and linked to witness if it is to open new horizons. The deference of liberalism in merely adopting Muslim particularity as the test for mean-
meaningful dialogue covers very little ground, while the conservative defense of Christian exclusiveness elicits its religious and secular opposite. Consequently, the West seems paralyzed from the left and from the right, two extreme wings that in their opposite tendencies prevent movement.

The Third World Challenge

One hopeful sign of a way forward is the enormous expansion of Christianity in the non-Western world, an expansion that has brought Third-World Christians into new responsibility for witness and dialogue. There is, of course, an important qualification with the recruitment of Third-World Christians by Western organizations for participation in dialogue meetings. Such participation often involves subscribing to unstated but real Western liberal assumptions and seeking to acquit oneself by the standards of one's benefactors. In spite of such major obstacles, it is nevertheless likely that dialogue for Third-World Christians will emerge in the context of genuine religious commitment, not as the unilateral outlet for a residual Western superiority complex. Thus, the emergence of non-Western Christianity in both its Protestant and Catholic forms signals a new development for the church and provides an exciting context for exploring the opportunities and challenges of Christian particularity.

One major difference, for example, is that, unlike Christians in the West, Third-World Christians have emerged from a profoundly pluralist religious and cultural world, a fact that deepens their understanding of the gospel, whatever other inadequacies they may have. Whereas Western Christians often make the assumption that religious pluralism occurred after the formulations of Christianity had been put in place, Third-World Christians know their Christianity is part and consequence of pluralism, rather than an exception to it. For many of them, responsibility for pluralism is one side of the coin and responsibility for Christian particularity is the other. This largely explains why, when Western Christians are calling
for an end to Christian exceptionalism (what some have called the "myth of Christian uniqueness") Third-World Christians for their part are calling for greater application of the gospel in church and society.

Picking up an issue that bears a strong resemblance to the problem of Western unilateralism, the American historian C. Vann Woodward writes that the white world has assumed black history to be nothing more than the effects of white people on black society.18 The fact that Third-World Christians are setting their own agenda implies a shift from preestablished Western categories and is thus hopeful for all concerned, however threatening in the short-term it may be to Western hegemonic claims. As the Ecumenical Association of African Theologians stressed in a recent conference, the central question for them is "the mission of the church today."19 Western pessimism, therefore, contrasts with Third-World confidence, just as its retreat contrasts with the glad celebration of the other.

Notes

1. In a highly polemical piece, the American scholar and self-avowed apostle of liberal relativism, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., set forth a grisly catalogue of the wrongs of Christianity and, by implication, of all religions. He wrote: "It is the belief in absolutes . . . that is the great enemy today of the life of the mind . . . history suggests that the damage done to humanity by the relativist is far less than the damage done by the absolutist . . . the great religious ages . . . were notorious not only for acquiescence in poverty, inequality, exploitation and oppression but for enthusiastic justifications of slavery, persecution, abandonment of small children, torture, genocide." Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The Opening of the American Mind," The New York Times Book Review, July 23, 1989.


3. Henry Venn (d.1873), the pioneer Secretary of the Church Missionary Society in London, expressed a similar view when he wrote in implicit criticism of British colonial expansion in Africa: "The breath of life in a native Church [was] self-government, self-support, self-extension." Cited in W. Knight, The Missionary Secretariat of Henry Venn (London, 1882) 416. Colonialism sought efficiency for its justification while missions sought "active response and co-operation from the people," a divergence of approach stemming from the divergent nature of mission and colonialism. J.F. Ade Ajayi, Christian Missions
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5. Cragg warns of the dangers of a protective vigilance about one’s own tradition outside a common obligation to the world and to each other. In that case religion acts as a force for division, insulation, and separation in a world otherwise brought together by the forces of science and technology. Kenneth Cragg, Alive to God (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) 8ff. Such protective vigilance, in fact, merely encourages mutual indifference to which our own religious tradition cannot be immune. “We are not alive to God if we are dead to each other,” says Cragg, Alive to God, 6.

6. Cragg, Minaret, 234. We cannot disqualify theological predicates, which is what Muslims and Christians often wish to do for each other, unless in fact they “describe” one God. In this way our very controversies are about a common faith, but conversely, that common faith is controversial within its unity. Cragg, Alive to God, p. 174.

7. Cragg, Minaret, 168.

8. A Muslim tract, Islam Explained, written by Abdul Jalil of the Al-Huda Islamic Center, Elberton, Ga., lists as one of its distribution outlets the National Council of Churches of Christ of the United States of America. The tract speaks with full confidence of the claims and teachings of Islam, including the idea of Islam as the confirmation and completion of monotheist religion. It would be a major advance if Christian churches are accorded similar freedom and facility in Islamic countries. All sides are challenged to a similar consistency of responsibility and reciprocity lest one side’s particularity becomes exclusive of the other’s.

9. Cragg, Minaret, 204.


11. Cragg, Minaret, 222. Kalim Siddiqi of the Muslim Institute in London is equally forthright in his condemnation of the West and the exclusive claim of Muslims to God’s truth. He writes, “The position that has to be taken now, and only the Islamic Movement can take it, is that the Western civilization is in fact a plague and a pestilence. It is no civilization at all. It is a disease. It feeds upon itself to its own detriment. The West today is qualitatively no different from the jahiliyyah, the primitive savagery and ignorance that prevailed in Arabia and the rest of the world at the time of the Prophet Muhammad.” Kenneth Cragg, Jesus and the Muslims: An Exploration (London: George Allen and Unwin) 284. It is difficult to avoid observing that the openness of Western society to the Muslim presence itself is what enables and protects such views which would be inconceivable for Christians in Muslim countries.

12. Quoted in Cragg, Minaret, 227.

13. Cragg, Minaret, 222.
14. Writing of Christianity in this regard, Cragg says that "the duty to bring others to Him who asks ['What do men say that I am?'], that they may answer for themselves" remains a Christian responsibility. *Minaret*, 235.

15. vi:31; xxii:74; xxxix:87.


18. Woodward writes: 'For however sympathetic they may be, white historians with few exceptions are primarily concerned with the moral, social, political, and economic problems of white men and their past. They are prone to present to the Negro as his (sic.) history the record of what the white man believed, thought, legislated, did and did not do about (sic.) the Negro.' C. Vann Woodward, *The Future of the Past: Historical Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

19. This is published in a report, *La Mission de L'Eglise Aujourd'hui*, Kinshasa.
Globalization in Theological Education:

Implications for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenical Understanding

Jane Idleman Smith

Nearly ten years ago, the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada began to chart an essentially new direction for theological education in North America, one in which the heart of both the faculty and the student body in our theological schools was to be challenged.

To begin this venture, a committee on "internationalization of theological education" was set up, of which I was a member. We soon questioned whether or not "internationalization" was an acceptable term to describe our task. For some of the members, that word evoked the mindset with which we are now so uncomfortable—i.e., Western imperialism. In order to get on with business, we settled somewhat reluctantly on "globalization" as a serviceable description of what we would like to encourage as a major agenda item for our theological schools.

As our discussions continued we repeatedly found ourselves caught in the snare of language. Sometimes a term that appeared to be neutral opened up old wounds. At other times the participants themselves, representing a range of institutions and theological perspectives, used the same terminology but

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understood it in very different ways. Some of the terms and concepts that emerged in these early discussions are these: international, ecumenical, missiological, inclusive, universal, evangelical, dialogical. When the now popular phrase "globalization of theological education" is used, it is too easy to assume that everyone means the same thing by it. These words and their connotations suggest some of the deep problems that theological educators encounter in the struggle to recognize the relation of the particular to the universal, the church to the world.

The original Committee on Globalization, chaired by Donald Shriver, gave way to the Task Force on Globalization, which continues to meet regularly as part of the committee structure of the ATS. In addition to sponsoring this task force, the Association has been responsible for a range of surveys, reports and publications in the general area of globalization of theological education. Its publication *Theological Education* has been a major forum for articles and exchanges on this topic. A review of some of these essays, published in this journal from 1985-90, will outline the major issues and perspectives on the subject of globalization.

**Definitions**

In the spring 1986 issue of *Theological Education*, David Schuller, associate director of the ATS and coordinator of the globalization efforts of that organization, provided a summary of the problems that institutions encounter, based on data gleaned in a survey of some one hundred member institutions. These problems can be clustered in several areas: (a) the difficulties of expecting overseas students to be able to function in light of Western cultural particularities and curriculum expectations, (b) the problems of separating Western "good intentions" from disguised imperialism, (c) issues for students, including financial support, language difficulties and basic living problems, and (d) staffing and financial implications for institutions. Equally important in his identification of these
problem areas was his distinction between evangelical concerns and cultural enlightenment.

In the same issue, Don Shriver outlined the major tasks in the project of globalization of theological education. Three of these areas of "ecumenical engagement" are particularly significant for theological schools planning for the 1990s and beyond. These issues are stated in the form of questions for debate: "Should the unity of the church or the unity of humanity be the focus for our understanding of the ecumenical reality?...Is there an inherent tension, even contradiction, between the evangelistic mission of the church and the loving respect owed by Christians to all the cultures, communities and religions of the human world?...Is 'proclamation' compatible with 'dialogue'?’ Under the category of "the study of other world religions and Christian mission" (note the combination), Shriver questions whether "it" should be an option or a requirement. In my own years of engagement with interfaith conversation, it has seemed to me that the desire to link the two as Shriver does is somewhat of a false hope. For many, the study of other world religions is precisely not for purposes of Christian mission, especially as that task traditionally has been understood.

Understanding versus Proclamation

The discussions of the ATS committee on Globalization demonstrated that the word globalization could serve a range of purposes. Coming at that time from Harvard Divinity School, I brought to the conversation my own concerns: the need to know about Christianity in other world contexts and to know about world religions as a basis for conversation, dialogue, and potential theological growth. Others, coming from different institutional backgrounds, saw globalization as a way to learn more about other peoples of the world in order to bring them the gospel more effectively. When African Cardinal Francis Arinze gave his plenary address at the 1986 ATS biennial, he warned that the careless pursuit of globalization in theological
education could result in theological eclecticism. Stressing the importance of being grounded in one's own faith community, Arinze described the theologian as a witness, not as an independent theoretician. He then defined the issue clearly with the following words:

By interreligious dialogue the Church puts itself as an instrument into the hands of divine providence...In such a dialogue the Church discovers the working of God in the other religions...ways of truth which illumine all mankind, and preparation for the Gospel... (p. 25)

While Arinze stressed the need for balance between dialogue and witness, his concern was that mission be clearly represented in conversation with adherents of other religions:

It would be a mistaken theology to argue that interreligious dialogue should replace missionary evangelization of the followers of other religions...Dialogue and proclamation are both necessary. Christians have no right to deprive other believers of the riches of the mystery of Christ... (p. 26)

One of the clearest critiques of this position was set forth by Barbara Brown Zigmund, who questioned the distinction between dialogue and proclamation. Dialogue, she noted, is the rational openness to the value of the faiths of other persons, while Christian proclamation stems from "a passionate Christocentric relationship between a person and God." A person of faith would not, or should not, find these two endeavors separable, much less mutually exclusive. Two years later in her own presidential address to the ATS, Zigmund pointed to a growing tension between evangelism and toleration in theological education. Our seminaries see their task as education for three generally separable purposes: conversion, understanding, and appreciation. Witnessing, or evangelization, in interfaith dialogue is based on our common humanity as God's creatures. Tolerance in interfaith dialogue is based on the natural differences in the ways God has related to the world. The value of interfaith dialogue in seminaries has to do with
appreciating the ways in which we are different rather than in understanding other religions in light of God’s revelation in Christ alone, or in pressing for conversion. Her summary comments on that occasion were both accurate and prophetic: “As the ATS pursues its ‘globalization’ agenda the tension between evangelism and tolerance will continue to haunt us” (p. 48).

At the ATS biennial meeting in which Cardinal Arinze spoke, Don Browning made a presentation on “Globalization and the Task of Theological Education in North America” that is considered to be a foundational piece. 6

Browning attached four distinct meanings to the word globalization: (1) the universal mission of the church to evangelize the world; (2) ecumenical cooperation among the various branches of the Christian church itself; (3) dialogue between Christianity and other religions of the world; and (4) the mission of the church to help the poor and disadvantaged of the world. A practical theologian himself, Browning questioned whether theological education can develop educational and theological methodologies that enable students to see the analogies between Christian experience and other kinds of experience. The point is the ability to interpret allegedly non-Christian experiences which our increasingly pluralistic culture provides so that they will deepen a practical global ministry. Browning’s reflection that it would take a revolution to train theological thinkers and leaders of the church to share a vital interest in global issues with their congregation is sobering. I believe that this is the task of the seminary today.

The Challenge of Inclusivity

The Association of Theological Schools has also been concerned with stretching the boundaries of theological education to include non-Western, non-American persons. This, of course, is what is meant by those concepts that are already getting frayed by overreference (though probably not by overimplementation) in most of our seminaries: inclusiveness, diversity, and racial/ethnic and class differentiation. In 1987

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Gayraud Wilmore stressed that our divinity schools can no longer afford to ignore the demographic changes that are a reality across our country. "The American metropolitan society of this century," he said, "has been impregnated with a cultural vitality and creativity that may be indispensable for the solidarity and renewal of the human community in our time." He identified diversity as not only the presence of non-Christian communities, but as denominational, ecclesial, theological, liturgical, ethical and spiritual. Complicating all this, he said, is the necessity of a contextual analysis that takes into account other cultural, sociological, economic and political diversities. I would add that the ATS Task Force on Globalization and its parallel Committee on Underrepresented Constituencies have come to realize that globalization and inclusiveness may not always be compatible.

Another important contribution to the general discussion about globalization, and especially its theological implications, was provided by Robert Shreiter in his excellent article in 1989 entitled, "Teaching Theology from an Intercultural Perspective." Shreiter pointed to the potential distinction between the terms global and inclusive suggested above when he said that Christianity is challenged both by its own manifestations in other cultures and by the different voices present in American culture. He went on to discuss what he called a third or specifically theological dimension: "In our embrace of a genuine pluralism (where difference is taken seriously), what happens to the unity and normativity of Christian faith?" (p. 15). Shreiter noted that a pluralism that refuses to evaluate is not pluralism at all, but really a kind of indifference or even solipsism and thereby an excuse to abandon the struggle for truth. Christianity has too long been caught in a "sender" rather than a "receiver" mode, he observed, and should now move to combine these in an approach that is more dialogical. Carrying Barbara Zigmund's point to what may be its logical conclusion, he proposed that the only way to accept the other as truly other is to admit that it is possible for the self, in fact, to change.
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In responding to Shreiter, Fumitaka Matsuoka raised two questions that all theological educators need to ask before being swept even more rapidly along on the tide of globalization enthusiasm: "What do we really want to accomplish from the multicultural inclusiveness in teaching theology?" and "What are our basic assumptions for teaching and learning theology from an intercultural perspective?"9 Taking a slightly different tack from Shreiter, Matsuoka suggested that rather than focusing too sharply on differences, it is both appropriate and necessary to seek shared relatedness. In such an encounter, he says, "both parties become conscious not only of their own cultural and linguistic worlds but also of the liminal world that is born between them through encounter with each other's self-concern"(p. 39).

The articles that have been cited from Theological Education are only a few of those that have appeared in the last decade on the general subject of globalization. In addition the ATS has sponsored several workshops, the papers for which at present are still in manuscript form. Two of those, presented in Toronto in 1989, deserve special mention. Fumitaka Matsuoka dealt particularly with the issue of pluralism in the American context.10 After pointing to some very practical problems for theological education, such as the fact that the cost is often prohibitive for minority and foreign students, he mentioned what many of us have found to be a very troubling reality: the growing gap between theological schools and American culture when the former is making efforts at globalism and inclusiveness while the latter is showing increasing evidence of provincialism, self-preoccupation and racial tension. We are caught, he reflected, in the bind of elitist academic standards on the one hand and denominational provincialism on the other. Matsuoka added that a plural theological conversation must be free to discover what is new and free to revise the agenda in order to move beyond the initial boundaries of inquiry. I will take the liberty of citing Matsuoka's words in this context because I find them so very relevant to our task:

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Globalization challenges us to make a shift in our fundamental perceptions and values toward those who are different and "other" from us... Promises without honest experiences and the acknowledgement of pain and alienation offer merely cheap grace. What is needed is more than a mere "exposure trip/immersion" in a foreign setting. One needs to internalize the deep pain of human alienation, of which cross-cultural and cross-gender relationships are a part. Globalization, therefore, does not fit into any developmental model of education because it is disjunctive. It needs to be understood as transformative...

The second of the unpublished papers prepared for the ATS is by Carolyn Sharp. Sharp pointed to something that many of us involved in the study of other world religions have long known. Our potential partners in dialogue may not be at all eager to listen to us, given the history of Christian intolerance. They may, in fact, feel a deep hostility toward Christianity for having to endure the discrepancy between actual Christian behavior and the a priori Christian position that Christian faith is liberative and that Christianity is a way of peace. She remarked that we must be ready to deal honestly with the criticism and anger that prospective dialogue partners may bring to the conversations. (In my years of involvement in Christian-Muslim dialogue I can attest to the validity of that observation.) If the cause of dialogue is genuinely to be furthered, she noted, schools of theology must avoid the kind of theological teaching that assumes others would be better off if they knew and accepted the message of the gospel.

Four Major Concerns for Theological Educators

A number of observations could be made about the kinds of issues raised by these thinkers. Some like Matsuoka have tried to get to the heart of the matter by questioning why we are making the push toward globalization in the first place. Others have assumed certain points of departure and built on those. I think those of us who are theological educators in the
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in the United States and Canada need to take very serious stock of these concerns and think more clearly about the ramifications of our commitments. As schools and as individuals formulating our ideas in relation both to globalization and inclusiveness, we will not always agree.

1. Western theoretical and methodological assumptions. Put rather boldly, we need to be very aware of the dangers of educational and theological imperialism. As Sharp reminded us, our colleagues from other national, religious and racial-ethnic groupings may find it difficult to forget the history of imposition of Western Christian values upon both cultural systems and basic approaches to education.

This concern has several facets. It may mean first that persons from other cultures are quite naturally suspicious of our motivations for wanting to include them, and their perspectives, in our educational programs. It may also mean that when we invite such persons to participate in our institutions, we may be setting them up for a very difficult experience, because we presuppose that their educational training will allow them to succeed in a Western/American context. If they are able to attain admission in our programs at all they not only must use a language that is not their own but must operate within a framework of educational assumptions with which they may not be familiar.

Our inherent assumptions generally seem to be that such persons will either "learn" to think the way we do and succeed or (unfortunately) give up the venture and go home. This to me is the more subtle and much more dangerous aspect of the matter. We are so thoroughly grounded in our Western methodological and theological assumptions, and generally so unsophisticated about the viability of other possible approaches, that we can be quite oblivious to our own educational environment. This not only sets up the visitor for the alternatives of changing or failing; it makes it doubly difficult for us to hear and thus profit from the dialogue with these persons.

2. Globalization as a means of evangelization/dialogue. As I have just suggested, this is an issue of great complexity. Can
Western theological educators agree on a common starting point as we analyze our deepest motivations for expanding the arena of theological conversation? My experience suggests that we cannot. Let us say that there is a continuum with evangelism (or mission, proclamation) located at one end and dialogue (or open-ended engagement) at the other. Donald Shriver asked if the goal of globalization is the unity of the church or the unity of humanity. While he did not relate this question to the matter of evangelization and/or dialogue, that seems to be the basic concern. When it really comes down to it, are we concerned to engage those of other cultures, faiths and worldviews in conversation primarily because we wish to share with them the good news of the gospel (in the perhaps unspoken but always ready hope that they will accept this news into their own lives), or are we primarily eager to be challenged by the possibility that our own lives will be changed and our own theological imaginations stretched?

Some of those who have struggled with this issue, such as Barbara Brown Zigmund, would say that this is a false dichotomy because proclamation must be a component of dialogue if the dialogue is to be real, and dialogue and witness are part of the same enterprise. Others would argue that ultimately the two must be in tension because to hold something with conviction, to believe it is true, compels one to say that contradictory beliefs held by others are simply false. Those who acknowledge that tension may find open dialogue incompatible with proclamation (or evangelism ultimately may be incompatible with tolerance). For them, proclamation either presses for conversion or settles for a neutral exchange of views.

One response to these issues has been to say that God is in fact working through all other religions, which provides the common base from which we move to more explicit conversations. Others argue that even this is a very subtle Christian orientation and raise the question how we can be open to other perspectives without simply presuming that, although appearing in foreign dress, they are in some way consistent with Christian preconceptions. They would cite Cardinal Arinze's
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notion of "preparation for the gospel" as a kind of presumptuousness.

3. Goals and purposes of dialogue. Related to the issue of whether dialogue and proclamation are ultimately part of the same enterprise is the question: What are the legitimate goals of dialogue? Why do we want to do it and why do we want to adapt theological education so that dialogue can take place? I have been involved in interfaith dialogue conversations through such agencies as the World and National Councils of Churches for many years and have participated in numerous discussions about goals and purposes. A great deal of rhetoric can be boiled down to three distinct reasons for conversation, all of which are suggested in one way or another by the commentators cited above and all of which need to be considered seriously as we think about the real implications of globalization:

a) Exchange of information. We want to learn more about each other directly so as to be better, and more accurately, informed. (Participants often beg the question of why such information is desirable or point to the reality of the shrinking world, etc.)

b) Ecumenical cooperation. The more we know about each other, the easier it will be for us to work cooperatively toward solving issues of poverty, oppression and global crisis. Here the conversation is moved from the theological to the ethical/practical level, and proclamation takes a back seat to a sharing of matters of urgent and immediate concern. Browning's identification of the role of ecumenical cooperation in helping the poor and oppressed is relevant here. These conversations seem to be essential as we try to solve the problems of how to live together in a world whose very survival is predicated on finding better ways of mutual interaction. It is what one theologian has called the arena for the dialogue of life with life. 13

c) Mutual growth. Here we return to some of the questions raised in the discussion of mission and proclamation. It is in the identification of this as a goal of dialogue that participants in discussions in which I have shared have found the greatest
difficulty in coming to common agreement. It is here, however, that I believe schools of theology in the West need to make serious, self-conscious decisions if they proceed on the road to inclusiveness and globalization. Do we wish to invite partners to dialogue in order to have our own minds changed? Are we willing to take the risk not only of possibly appropriating the insights of others as part of what we understand to be true but also of accepting the questions of others as our own questions?

When and if the door of possibility for a change of heart and mind is truly opened, the dangers are real. On the one hand, our prospective partners may be duly suspicious of our motivations, as suggested in my first point above. As a Muslim colleague has expressed it, Christians want us to enter the door of dialogue and exit the door of conversion. On the other hand, we may find the very foundation of those things we cherish most deeply shaken in ways that we did not anticipate and do not want. Many a theological student has become involved in study of and conversation with other faith traditions only to find him- or herself uprooted and disconnected from previously sustaining elements of Christian faith.

Shreiter's distinction between a pluralism that refuses to evaluate and one that seriously engages in the struggle for truth is pertinent here. If in the context of theological education we genuinely wish to engage our students in the struggle for truth, then we must be prepared for the risk. I am convinced that it is only by taking this risk that we are truly engaging in the educative process. Globalization in theological education is ultimately justified because the very process of encounter gives birth to a new world of being together, what Matsuoka has called a “liminal” world. We have the possibility of discovering something new together, neither unrelated to nor unduly constrained by the traditions that inform us and sustain us.

4. Globalization vs. inclusiveness. This concern moves the discussion into a somewhat different dimension. It is clear that by its very definition globalization includes inclusiveness; by opening our institutions to the perspectives of those from other cultural and religious groupings, we force ourselves to be more
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inclusive. On the other hand, the attention paid to ecumenicity on the global level may set back the progress toward inclusiveness on the local level. According to Wilmore, seminaries must use the wealth of the resources provided by the Christian faith to serve the religious needs of the people in their neighborhood. To do that, we must be sufficiently informed about the needs and expectations of these constituencies. This can present a real conflict with our concern for globalization. Does the inclusion of faculty from Spanish-speaking Latin America really help the needs of our indigenous Chicano communities? Do we simply presume a commonality of concerns among all of the persons who are not part of our dominant Anglo and generally more affluent constituencies? Given the limited financial resources of most of our schools, how do we balance the needs of students from overseas, who often are prevented from working in this country, with financial needs of persons from communities of color in our own neighborhoods? Have we joined the parade rushing toward global inclusiveness and overlooked the needs of those who are closest to us? Have we once again ignored our need to dialogue with and learn from persons in our own country?

Here, then, are just a few of the matters that face us as we consider the benefits of globalization and inclusiveness, and look for new opportunities for dialogue and ecumenical cooperation. We seem to think that "it" is good, although we are uncertain about just what "it" is and are in some obvious disagreement about the nature of the value of its pursuit. We are faced not only with the kinds of theoretical, philosophical and theological concerns mentioned above. We are also caught in the practical bind of limitations in financial and human resources or in the time our students have to spend in theological education. Should we try to do a little of everything or select several things to try to do well, or simply recognize that we have little choice but to continue with a fairly monolithic approach and merely acknowledge to ourselves and our students that there are other possibilities?
Most important, I would argue, is the urgent necessity of serious conversation (inter-institutionally as well as within our respective schools) as to why it is that we wish to create conditions in which ecumenical, interreligious and cross-cultural exchange can take place. I believe that we must look to the ATS for leadership in helping us to discover which different types of, or goals for, globalization are and are not basically compatible. The implications of this kind of frank discussion are the same for theological education as they are for denominationally and interdenominationally sponsored dialogue sessions. How can we be both "objective" academic institutions and "subjective" participants in ongoing theological traditions?

The boat has already been rocked administratively, pedagogically, and theologically; and choppy waters are ahead whether we like it or not. Seminaries and schools of theology need to decide how, and in what ways, we can provide leadership for the churches in matters of globalization and inclusiveness. (But, as Fredrica Thompsett remarked at an ATS meeting on basic issues in theological education in the summer of 1989, we cannot get so far ahead that the churches are not able to see our taillights.) We were all stirred by the recent speech of Czech poet and president Vaclav Havel to the United States Congress in which he said, "Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better in the sphere of our being as humans, and the catastrophe toward which this world is headed . . . will be unavoidable."10

I think it is neither trite nor presumptuous to say that those of us involved in the task of theological education do have a major responsibility to assume leadership that many accuse us of having lost. If we can be self-conscious and intentional as we plan for ways in which to meet these challenges, we can be more responsible to our students and more fully engaged partners in a dialogue that promises to be both exciting and essential in the new decade ahead.
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Notes
12. See, for example, Jeffrey Stout, Ethics after Babel, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985): "To hold our beliefs is precisely to accept them as true. It would be inconsistent, not a sign of humility, to say that people who disagree with beliefs we hold true are not themselves holding false beliefs" (24-25).
Globalization
in Theological Education:

The Global-Contextual Matrix
in the Seminary Classroom

M. Thomas Thangaraj

I WOULD LIKE TO PREFACE my reflections on globalization with some autobiographical notes. I have been working as a theological teacher in South India, at the Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, Madurai, from 1971 onwards. It was in the early seventies that the call for "contextualization" came powerfully to us in India, especially through the collective wisdom of a series of consultations on theological education held in India during the earlier decades and through the leadership of the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches. Anything from outside our own context national or regional—was seen as something to be rejected, or at least suspended for the moment. Those of us who were trained in the theologies of the West were asked to put those theologies on the waiting list and immerse ourselves in "Indian Christian Theology." Any talk about the "global" was seen as a threat to, or a betrayal of, the process of contextualization. This call to contextualization looked quite convincing not only because of biblical and theological convictions but also because, under the

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leadership of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, there were posters all over India which said, "Be Indian, Buy Indian." Even during the period of my study at Harvard (1980-83), the "local" took precedence over the "global" in my thinking and research.

But now I am teaching courses at Candler in an area called "World Christianity"! Under the umbrella of this topic, I am expected to "interpret the experience of and developments in the churches outside the United States to the churches in the United States, historically, theologically, and culturally." Quite a formidable task indeed! The interesting thing is that I am doing just the opposite of what I have been doing in India as a theological teacher. In India, I was enabling my students to engage intensely in the local context, while at Candler I am inviting my students to go beyond their context and look at the global reality, both ecclesial and human. Thus I am involved in the "globalization" of theological education at Candler. Yet in another respect, I am doing exactly the same thing at Candler that I did in India. In both situations I am telling my students that it is not enough if they have read Barth, Tillich, Kaufman, or Cobb; they should also have read M.M. Thomas, C.S. Song, Sankara, Radhakrishnan, and a host of others. Therefore, in my autobiography, these two concerns—globalization and contextualization—have come together. With that as the background, I want to reflect on globalization in theological education in the United States.

Globalization as Contextualization

I am convinced that globalization is the best way, and perhaps the only way, to do contextual theological education in this country. There are two major reasons for this. First of all, it is becoming more and more evident that we are able to recognize the contextual character of our own theological thinking only when we engage with theologies which have arisen in contexts other than our own. As long as we are not exposed to other "contextual" theologies, we fail to detect the contextual character of our own theology. From 1978-81, in the
department of systematic theology of the Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, I had a colleague from Sweden. When I visited him in Sweden in 1985, he told me, "Thomas, the one thing that I learned in India was that there was something called Swedish Christian theology!" An exposure to Indian Christian theology had led him to this new awareness. For centuries, theologians in the West had assumed that they were doing a theology which was a theology not controlled or constrained by the demands of their own context. Even Karl Barth, who did work out a thoroughgoing contextual theology for his own day, was quite unwilling to be self-consciously involved in constructing a contextual theology. In the introduction to his *Church Dogmatics*, he wrote:

> I believe that it is expected of the Church and its theology—a world within the world no less than chemistry or the theatre—that it should keep precisely to the rhythm of its own relevant concerns, and thus consider well what are the real needs of the day by which its own programme should be directed. I have found by experience that in the last resort the man in the street who is so highly respected by many ecclesiastics and theologians will really take notice of us when we do not worry about what he expects of us but do what we are charged to do.\(^2\)

Therefore, it is important that theologians and theological students are exposed to theologies which are self-consciously contextual so that they will be enabled to recognize the contextual character of their own theologies.

Secondly, in understanding one's own context, it is imperative that one perceives the interconnectedness of that context to other contexts. When this is not recognized, one's perception of the context and the contextual issues becomes either blurred or distorted. For example, the questions of ecology and environment, which are very contextual issues for the United States, can be understood only in a global context and through an international perspective. Similarly, contextual issues concerning Christian ministry are better understood in the light of
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global realities and problems. Thus, only through a process of globalization does one fulfill the task of contextualization.

To enable this kind of a globalization to happen in our seminaries, the presence of a few visiting professors from countries outside the United States or an increase in the percentage of international students in our schools is not enough. We need to adopt an entirely different theological and educational methodology in all the courses that are taught in our schools. Each subject that is offered in the seminary or school should be taught in such a way that the global-contextual matrix of that particular discipline is highlighted and explained. In this process of contextualization through globalization, the national faculty of our schools have a much more important role to play than the international faculty.

Globalization as Missionary Mutuality

ANOTHER AIM OF GLOBALIZATION IS TO DEVELOP an understanding of the mission of the church that is rooted in the local and open to the global. The modern missionary movement emphasized overseas missions to such an extent that our vision of the global church got distorted, and we began to see ourselves as "sending" churches and "receiving" churches. A growing number of our students are disillusioned and guilty about the mission of the church. For most of them mission has come to signify domination and subjugation of other cultures, religions, and peoples, rather than the sharing of the message of liberation in mutuality and solidarity.

The international community within our schools is partly responsible for this kind of disillusionment and guilt. By sharing the horror stories of the missionary era, we have successfully raised the consciousness of Christians in the First World with regard to the excesses of the missionary movement. But what we need now is the development of a sense of mutuality and partnership in our missionary vocation. Here again the process of globalization has a significant role to play. The international students and faculty in our schools need to be
viewed more as missionaries-in-residence than simply as students and teachers.

To enable the emergence of such a sense of mutuality and partnership, theological schools need to be in partnership with churches and theological schools in other parts of the world, especially the Two-Thirds World. Very often, international students are admitted into our programs and international faculty are appointed as visiting professors without any reference to the needs, demands, and programs of churches and theological schools in those countries. My own perception is that it is better to have mutual and sustained relationships with particular churches and schools abroad than to extend an open invitation to the international community to come and help in the process of globalization. Open invitations often lead to competition and a lack of understanding with regard to the actual needs of the churches in other parts of the world. The task of globalization should happen within the context of a concrete form of partnership so that a new and refreshing form of missionary mutuality may emerge. For example, the D.Th. program of the Senate of Serampore College in India is structured so that every doctoral student spends a year of study abroad in a school that is already in partnership with Serampore College. This is an excellent case of missionary mutuality.

Globalization as an Expression of Solidarity

The process of globalization, as we are aware, is not limited to intra-ecclesial cooperation and mutuality but involves the larger socio-political and religio-cultural global reality. I am sure that most of our schools offer courses on world religions and international politics and economics, and in some of our schools, this area of study is seen as part of the foundational requirement of the curriculum. In addition to reading and understanding world religions and global socio-political issues, I plead for a search for concrete forms and expressions of solidarity with the larger international and interreligious community.
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This concern can be addressed in two ways. First, we can be constantly on the lookout for occasions when we can express our solidarity with the larger global community. Most of our seminaries and theological schools are located in cities and towns where there is an international and interreligious community. For example, there are 4,000 Hindu families living in Atlanta and at least three Hindu temples. The process of globalization can be greatly enhanced through the expression of solidarity in their festivals, worship, and community life. In a similar way, we can promote globalization through expressions of solidarity during times of various international events and crises, such as the independence of Namibia, the fall of the Berlin wall, the massacre at Tiananmen Square, the Persian Gulf crisis, and so on.

Secondly, by enabling our students to spend at least a brief period of their study program in a country other than the United States, we can enable them to express their solidarity with the people of the globe. My own feeling is that our students widen their horizons and understand human solidarity to a far greater degree by spending significant time outside the United States than by merely being exposed to the token presence of international students and teachers at their own school. This became true when I took a group of Candler students on a Travel Seminar to South India last summer. Here again, one needs to work out the dynamics of such a program in full partnership with institutions and churches in other parts of the world. There are times when the churches and theological institutions in the Two-Thirds World see the task of educating the people from the First World as an additional burden to bear, while the education of their own students is understaffed, underequipped, and often financially strained.

Globalization as Inclusive Pedagogy

Theological schools are primarily institutions of education, not international social service agencies. This means that the task of globalization cannot be seen as an added program or
added program or an appendix to the work of the school. The spirit of globalization should permeate the very pedagogy of the school so that the teaching and learning method takes the concerns of globalization into account at every stage. This is a pedagogy of inclusivity. How can we teach the Bible adequately without including the hermeneutics of the liberation theologians from all over the world? Is it possible or desirable at all to teach the history of Christianity without taking into account the stories of women, Afro-Americans, and other oppressed peoples? Questions of this kind should inform and shape the pedagogy of our schools.

When I use the word inclusivity there are two possible dangers. First, it is possible to limit the discussion of inclusivity simply to the question of gender and race within our own national or regional context. I am always surprised by the way the word multicultural is used in our theological discussions. Very often, I find that it is confined to the inclusion of women and ethnic minorities in this country. We need to develop a larger concept and vision of inclusivity than that. Secondly, while inclusivity can be defined too narrowly, there is also the other danger of defining inclusivity in such a wide and encompassing manner that the local is swallowed up in the global. During the last two years I have met several Afro-American and women theologians who see the whole process of globalization as a cover-up for local injustices. This charge gains credibility because of the fact that it is much easier, and perhaps more exotic, to hire an international faculty than hire a woman or an Afro-American. Globalization can be more a threat than a help!

While noting the dangers, however, we still need to press on to work towards a pedagogy of inclusiveness. One of the prerequisites for such a pedagogy is an educated faculty—a faculty who are exposed to and familiar with the global concerns in their own disciplines. This may mean liberating our faculty from their prison of over-specialization, letting them freely wander around the globe and truly become "the citizens of the world."

I have offered some random reflections on the possible direction for the task of globalization. But one thing is clear to me:
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these directions cannot be mapped out in detail before we actually embark on the task of globalization. Our direction will become clearer to us as we take the risk of globalizing theological education. It is the Abrahamic journey of faith that will lead us ultimately to the promised land of holistic theological education.

Notes

1. This is the predecessor to the present Program on Theological Education of the World Council of Churches. As TEF, it was mainly concerned with theological education in the Two-Thirds World. But now, as PTE, its work is extended to all the six continents.

Preparing to Preach from Ephesians to Northside Church

William H. Willimon

[Editor's Note: One of the earliest issues of Quarterly Review contained this fine study of Ephesians by Will Willimon, who was at that time pastor of Northside United Methodist Church in Greenville, South Carolina. We have updated the dates on each passage.]

The first task of Christian preaching is to take the biblical text seriously. The second task is to take the congregational context with equal seriousness. 1

Where is the meeting point between our textual criticism and our textual proclamation? Where is the tie between the meaning of the ancient text in its originating context and its meaning for our day? I agree with Leander E. Keck that meaning is not found solely in the past via biblical criticism—it grows at the intersection between the ancient text and the modern congregation. 2 After all, it is our text, the product and critic of synagogue and church—not a cadaver to be dissected in a comparative religion class. The Bible was written by us, for us, against us. It makes little sense outside the gathered, worshiping, self-critical community of faith. 3 The necessary difficult, hermeneutical intersection between text and church is the preacher. The preacher is ordained to engage in what Keck calls “priestly listening.” The preacher works with the text as the congregation’s representative listener. The main value of all those hours of exegesis is that they help us to be better listeners.

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The preacher listens to a text and asks questions like: How does my congregation fit into this text? Who is being addressed here and why? How do we look like or unlike them? What is it that the text wants to say to us? Is it saying something that we do not want to hear? What would need to occur for us to hear what is being said?

I say this in hopes of justifying what I do here. I am not going to give detailed exegeses of selected texts; rather, I shall attempt to underscore what I have said about the preacher as the interpretive intersection between text and sermon by reconstructing the way I move from text to sermon as practicing homiletician. I am going to talk about the text in context. A report of my own exegetical work will be included, but only as one part of the larger process of sermon preparation in the context of a local church.4

An Overview of the Context

NORTHSIDE CHURCH BEGAN ITS LIFE twenty-five years ago on the north end of Greenville, South Carolina, and became a fast-growing congregation. Greenville is an exploding former textile town, consistent friend of the J.P. Stevens Company and the foe of organized labor, home of fundamentalist Bob Jones University and a born-gain, Bible-believing, P.T.L. Club-watching Baptist church on every corner.

Northside has spent its past ten years experiencing the same decline which has plagued many other mainline, postsuburban churches, moving from nine hundred members in the early sixties to about five hundred and fifty today. New churches closer to the growing edge of the suburbs, disagreement with some of the social principles of the United Methodist Church and former pastors, and congregational self-doubt all took their toll at Northside. While we have turned the corner on our membership attrition problem and finances have never been better, the congregation is still haunted by memories of a once-great youth program where we now have next to none, the specter of empty Sunday school rooms, and the inarticulate but ever-present fear that in spite of recent progress, we may be dying.

The people of Northside are, on the whole, solid, uncomplicated, decent, hard working, white, middle aged, and middle class. They inhabit a world of southern gentility, formica and linoleum kitchens, biweekly paychecks, moderately well-adjusted children, Clemson football games, taunts by hardshell Fundamentalists at the office, and vacations in rented houses at the beach. A little better than a third of them are in church each Sunday and nearly all of them give money to
the church; some give sacrificially. Yes, they love their church but are quick to add, "Religion is mostly an individual thing, a relationship with Jesus." For many of them, the church is their social life, the source of their best friends, and a major part of the interlocking pieces of the picture of being Christian in Greenville. They call the pastor when they go to the hospital and expect him to visit in their homes at least once a year. Some read their Bibles regularly. While 80 percent of them recently responded that preaching was the most important activity of the church, music by the choir was the "most meaningful" activity in Sunday worship for the majority. Most voted for Ronald Reagan and most of them think that the United Methodist Church should "stick to religion and stay out of politics."

Pentecost at Northside begins with the preacher being welcomed back from annual conference. The church lay-leader (a woman) and the chairperson of the administrative board (a woman) say a few words of appreciation for the prospect of another year with the same preacher and then lay hands upon his head with a prayer. Then the summer begins. Heat—slowly rising in intensity until the suffocating, deadening, humid intensity of late July—is ever present. There will be one-week vacations, watermelon cuttings, a 30 percent drop in attendance, and an absence of the choir during August. It is too hot to get excited about anything. Sunday school classes will doggedly try to keep going throughout the summer doldrums—without much response. Worship will be notable mostly for empty pews and the roar of an inadequate air-conditioner. Church life will consist of hand-to-mouth financial reports and too few teachers for the annual vacation church school. Now, more than at any time in the church year, we could use some sermonic encouragement rather than discouragement. It would be nice to hear a little good news to help us make it through another week. It would be good to know under what terms this poor struggling, friendly, ordinary group of Christians is the church. These are the dog days of Pentecost, the Sunday-to-Sunday summer limping along into fall which characterizes this season at Northside Church, 435 Summit Drive, with a $60,000 mortgage, next to Beth Israel Synagogue, and only a short drive from the suburbs.

This is the congregation to whom these sermons must be addressed. How close to Ephesus is 435 Summit Drive?
Sunday, August 4, 1991

Exegesis and Exposition of Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16

The initial goal is to understand what this text said in its original context.

A. First I must establish the text. What words did the original writer write? In 4:6 'all' (panton) need not be limited to the church, otherwise, the more exclusive word pantes would have been used. The 'us' which some manuscripts add is an explanatory gloss, so I shall translate 'of all' rather than RSV 'of us all.'

What are the boundaries of my lection? This rather difficult question is due to the eclectic nature of the epistle. Nevertheless, it is important to establish the proper boundaries, lest I abuse my text by cutting it out of its setting.

The omission of verses 8-10 in the lectionary is probably justified for homiletical reasons. These verses appear to be an aside which would be difficult to interpret in the context. Some believe that 9-10 may be a later addition. (Compare with 1 Pet. 3:19.) I shall not add 8-10 to my text for preaching.

The rest of the verses seem to be clear of variants or glosses.

B. Now I am ready for more detailed word study of the text to make sure I know what the text meant. Commentaries and lexicons are helpful here.

Vs. 1a: "therefore." A standard Pauline convention (1 Thess. 3:1; Rom. 12:1) signaling a transition, usually from a dogmatic section to one which treats the practical, ethical implications of the previous affirmation. Relates, I assume, to all of chapter 1-3, not just the immediately preceding verse. Note that chapters 1-3 are kerygmatic or doxological rather than purely dogmatic. Ethics is arising out of liturgy here.

Vs. 1c: "calling." An estate resulting from God's call. Probably this is baptismal talk.

Vs. 2a: "lowliness and meekness." When compared with other Pauline contexts (1 Cor. 4:21) it suggests an attitude toward others which has its roots in submission to God. Compare also with Rom. 12:10.

Vs. 2b: "patience." Perhaps "forbearance" is more to the point here.

Vs. 3a: "eager." Seems weak in RSV. "Diligently" is better.

Vs. 3b: "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." RSV seems correct in capitalizing "Spirit." Pneuma in vs. 4 is obviously the baptistically bestowed Holy Spirit, not the warmhearted animorum concordia, the spirit of fellowship. Unity of the church is a gift of the Spirit, not a human
achievement of warm feelings toward one another. In my interpretation of this unity, I must be clear that it is not a result of subjective human striving but an objective result of the bestowal of the Spirit.

Vs. 4: "(There is) one body and one Spirit." The parallelism in vs. 4-6 suggests that this is a liturgical fragment, perhaps a baptismal creed or hymn inserted here to justify the foregoing ethical injunctions. I found some commentators supplying 'You must become' before verse 4, but this destroys its force. Unity is an objective result of the objective fact of 'your call' (in baptism? vs. 5).^6

Vs. 5: Continued parallelism. Why is the other sacrament not mentioned, particularly in the light of 1 Cor. 10-12, which sees the Lord's Supper as the basis for unity? Perhaps it is assumed. The writer quotes from a baptismally derived liturgical fragment, so there is no suggestion of the Lord's Supper.

Vs. 6a: 'of all.' I have previously discussed the variant here. Stress on the sovereignty of God is typical of this epistle.

Vs. 6b: "through" and 'in.' Precise meaning unclear.

Vs. 7: "Grace was given to each of us." The stress is upon the grace which each believer has received. Why was this gift given to each of us? Read on in vs. 11ff.

Vs. 11: Much discussion in commentaries about who these people were and what they did in the church. The speculation is not justified by the text. These offices are listed only for the purpose of underscoring verse 12. Verse 11 is unconcerned to legitimate these offices. Shows a more established, institutional view of the church than is apparent in earlier epistles.

Vs. 12a: "for the equipment of the saints" (my translation). Word study suggests "upbuilding" or "mending" as synonyms for this "equipping." Here we see why the various leaders were given to the church—for the edification of the church.

Vs. 12b: "for the work of ministry." Where does the comma belong? Can only be determined by looking at whole context. Better to omit the comma after "saints." The laity are not mere consumers of the clergy's gifts. The test for the effectiveness of the leader's gifts is how well these gifts equip all saints for ministry. No reason to assume that "the work of the ministry" is the sole possession of the leaders. I prefer the NEB "for work in his service" in order to make clear to the laos (people) that the diakonia (service) which is being done here is theirs too. Implication of 12a and 12b: leaders are divinely given gifts to equip the laos for diakonia."
PREACHING FROM EPSHENS

Vs. 12c: "for building up the body of Christ." Here we return to earlier theme of vs. 4:1-7. Developing unity and building up the church are among the chief things leaders do in the church.

Vs. 13a: "we all." All of us in the church, not all people in general.

"The saints" (vs. 12) is the object here.

Vs. 13b: "maturity." In contrast to childishness (vs. 14). Is disunity a mark of Christian immaturity?

Vs. 14: Verses 14-16 are one long sentence in the Greek. Verses 14-15 suggest that the letter is addressed to those who have become the victims of false, divisive teaching. Perhaps this is a key to the purpose of the epistle. No attempt to combat or argue with the deceitful doctrines.

Vs. 15: "speaking the truth." This RSV translation of atetheuontes is open to question: "walking in the truth" or "living by truth" are better options, particularly in light of the use of "truth" in this epistle (compare 4:1, 4:5).

Vs. 16: The growth of the whole is emphasized here, not individual members. "Joined and knit together" (166) suggests the early baptismal image of the initiate being joined to Christ, grafted into the church. I prefer the NBB's "the whole frame grows through the due activity of each part, and builds itself up in love." Christ upbuilds and strengthens the church in love.

C. I now read the entire text again, with an eye toward its general thrust. I make the following assumptions: A divided church is being addressed. In general terms, the writer urges these Christians to be who they are: those who are made one in Jesus Christ by being baptized into the body of Christ. The writer's injunctions are based, it seems, upon reference to a familiar baptismal creed or hymn. The church is graciously given the gifts it needs to be unified: the Spirit, moral behavior, various leaders, and the truth.

Now is the time to make decisions about the sermon. My study of the text has suggested that the central matter is the source and nature of the unity of the church. I will bypass considerations about the nature of Christian ministry (4:11-13), or standing firm in the face of false doctrine (4:13-14), or Christian maturity (4:15), except as these themes underscore or enrich the theme of unity.

This decision is justified, I believe, on the basis of the text and my congregation. My exegesis shows unity the central, recurring melody amidst a number of derivative or supporting interludes. My assessment of my congregation shows that unity amidst diversity is as big a problem at 435 Summit Drive as anywhere. In the sermon, I will search for those ways in which our situation in disunity might be analogous to their
situations. The text will be generalized to move the theme from the initial context to my congregational context. I find it helpful to be as honest and intentional as possible about the transition. Thus I must ask myself questions like: Is this a fair generalization to make about this text? What cultural, historical, and theological differences between them and us are being overlooked in order to make this transition? This hermeneutical "jump" is a particularly dangerous, but utterly essential, step in preaching.

The drama of this text, the pivot, is 4:4-6—the liturgical fragment which becomes the basis for the ethical injunctions toward unity. Here is the perspective from which I can move back from Ephesus (or wherever) to Northside—the early church (or churches) to whom this letter was addressed had problems "keeping it all together." The writer calls it to be the unified body which it is meant to be, reminding it of its "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (4:5) origins.

D. I still find helpful the time-honored practice of attempting to state the theme of a proposed sermon in one sentence. Here is the substance, the "what," of my message. Of course, the danger of this device is that it encourages me to think of my text as an abstract, generalized idea which has been distilled from the text. This may tempt me to preach an idea or mere information, rather than to enable my congregation to experience the message. The folk at Northside Church do not need more interesting religious information. They need, and seek, confrontation with and experience of the living Word. In spite of these pitfalls, I don’t know where I am going in writing a sermon until I can clearly state a theme.

Here is my proposed theme: Remembrance of our baptism can enable a divided church to become one.

E. Having determined what I shall say, how shall I say it? I am learning to pay as much attention to the form of a text as its context. William A. Beardslee’s Literary Criticism of the New Testament has been helpful in enabling me to identify the form of a text. Beardslee examines how literary forms "worked" for the church. We ask, "What is this language trying to do to the listeners?" In order to reduplicate the original impact of a text upon today’s listeners, one must attempt to use the same literary form, employing it in much the same way as it originally worked. Thus we create the same salvific occasion in their lives that was created in the primitive church.

Ephesians is an "in house" publication. It clearly intends to rally the knowing about the known in their midst. Its source is the liturgy; even its form has a liturgical quality about it. If I could sing it, perhaps I would.
PREACHING FROM EPHESIANS

Here are ecclesial doctrine and ethics rooted in the church’s worship. How can today’s church hear this as the first church heard it? Of course, I must take care that my form clarifies rather than obscures the one-sentence theme which I have stated.

I have decided to preach Eph. 4:1-7, 11-16 as a baptismal sermon. One thing we share with the Ephesians—all of us have been baptized. We, like them, are still living out the meaning of that event. There is always someone, young or old, in the process of baptismal preparation. If possible, such persons should be asked to plan to be baptized this Sunday. I will view the sermon not only as a time to instruct the newly baptized and their sponsors but also a time for the rest of us to remember our baptism, to reflect upon the significance of our baptism as a sign and source of the unity of the church.

My denomination has a relatively new Service of Baptism and Baptismal Renewal. It would be appropriate to include this service as a response to the sermon.

Sunday, August 11, 1991
Exegesis and Exposition of Ephesians 4:25-5:2

A. Establish the text. In 4:28, "doing honest work with his hands." Among the seven variant readings of this phrase, some give emphasis to idiais ("his own"), others add to agathon ("the good"). Some of the variants seem to be omissions in the interest of lessening verbosity. The RSV translation is therefore adequate. Is 4:326 to be translated as "you" or "us"? Perhaps, say some commentators, the third-person plural relates to the origin of this phrase in a hymn. I choose "God has forgiven you" because it parallels the preceding clauses. Again in 5:2, there are variants between "you" and "us." The external evidence supporting either reading is evenly balanced. The "us" seems preferable here. The author is probably quoting from an early hymn or liturgical fragment, therefore the third-person plural seems appropriate. On the whole, the variants are of minor significance, so our text stands as it is.

While there is something to be said for considering 5:1-2 as an integral part of the thought unit, not of 4:25-32 but of 5:1-20, it can also be seen as a doxological summation of 4:25-32 rather than a doxological preface to 5:3-20. The lection can thus be accepted as it is appointed for the day.

B. Detailed study of the text. Vs. 25a: "putting away." An aorist, that is, action done in the past with continuing significance in the present. Relates to 4:22a, "put off your old nature." I prefer the NEB "lay aside"
or possibly, "strip off," since it is likely that this metaphor is baptismal in origin. In early baptismal practice, much was made of stripping off old clothing in order to put on a new identity.\textsuperscript{12}

Vs. 25c: "for" or "because." The preposition implies that we should do these things because we are joined together as "members one of another." We can "speak the truth"\textit{ because} we are in one body.

Vs. 27: "devil."\textit{ Diablo} is not a typical Pauline term. It is found only here (Eph. 6:11) and in the Pastorals.

Vs. 28a: see earlier notes on the variants in A. Thieves in the church?

How shocking.

Vs. 28b: "to give to those in need." No need to limit this to the needy in the church (unlike Rom. 15:26).

Vs. 29a: "evil talk." What explicitly is being said here? The lexicon says that the word could be "rotten" or "worthless" talk. Not sure what type of speech is being condemned.

Vs. 29d: "that it may impart grace." Our talk should be edifying to the church, but in what precise way is it gracious and edifying cannot be determined here.

Vs. 30b: "in whom you were sealed." Baptism is the "seal of the Spirit" (compare Eph. 1:13; 2 Cor. 1:22). Once again, as in the preceding text (Eph. 4:3-7), the motive and source for our behavior is baptismal. Note of objectivity and comfort here in this sealing until the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30c). No implication that the Spirit may or may not be present in the baptized or that they might lose it.\textsuperscript{13}

Vss. 31-32: This section sounds like a moralistic catalogue of Christian do's and don'ts. The key to it is in the opening "therefore" (4:25a) and in the concluding "as God in Christ forgave you" in 4:32d. These good things have been done for you by Christ, therefore you do good to those whom Christ loves. Ethics rooted in the\textit{kerygma}.

Vs. 5:1a: "be imitators of God." Relates to the forgiveness theme of 4:32? We are to forgive as God forgives.

Vs. 5:16: "as beloved children." Our imitation arises out of our being children. Children copy their parents. Since baptism is our adoption as children, our birth into the family, I once again claim a baptismal rootage for this injunction.

Vs. 5:2c: "a fragrant offering." This "sacrifice" of Christ is not as atonement for sin (substitutionary atonement). The emphasis is upon the complete, unreserved self-giving of Christ; a self-giving which elicits our gratitude and self-giving. This is a striking image of ethics as "a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." I think of a liturgical fragment from my own tradition, Isaac Watts's hymn, "When I Survey the
Wondrous Cross.' The rather extravagant liturgical language fits the extravagance of the gift and the response.

Some general observations: 4:25-32 shows a recurring pattern of prohibition—commandment—motivation in dealing with ethical concerns. Suggests that these verses were part of early (baptismal?) catechetical formulas. Perhaps they took this form for ease of memorization. Once again, we are dealing with ecclesial ethics arising out of and referring back to liturgical and catechetical data.

C. I read the text again. Again I am impressed by this rather tiring string of ethical injunctions in 4:25-32. These can be categorized as rules for behavior in the church—rules in order to keep a potentially divided church unified. General admonitions rather than rules in reference to a specific situation. The baptismal thread runs throughout, in the background, cropping up (possibly) in 4:30, 32, and 5:1 and 2. "Imitators of God," "beloved children," and "a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" are poetic phrases that hit me. I will focus my sermon here. The preceding ethical injunctions, if allowed to form the sermon, could turn into simplistic moralism or irrelevant scolding, discouraging rather than encouraging. I do not get that impression from reading the text. The original hearers were being urged to do these things as "beloved children," not as bickering brats. It is not a matter of "catching more flies with honey than with vinegar"; it is a matter of imperative flowing from indicative. We are called by the gospel to be, before we are called to be good.

Therefore, instead of using the string of ethical injunctions to urge the folk at Northside to be good, I will let my sermon be guided by 5:1-2 and urge them to be what they already are—beloved, adopted children of God who are encouraged here to be imitative of God the parent.

For Ephesians, to offer themselves to God, to be imitators of God meant to refrain from anger, stealing, evil talk (whatever that is), bitterness, and malice. What might the imitation of God—doing for each other in the church that which God did for us in Christ—mean for us at Northside?

D. I now state the theme of the proposed sermon in one sentence: As Christians, we are called to behave like God's children because we have become God's children. Baptism is the act which initiates us into the church, forms us into the family, and signifies our adoption as God's own people. Therefore, once again, I may begin with baptism as the source of our identity and therefore the source of our behavior in the church.
E. How shall I say it? I have decided that the text begins with a list of ethical injunctions. This string of admonitions sounds like a simplistic list of duties for becoming good little girls and boys. But by the end, at 4:32 and 6:1-2, we see that the injunctions are rooted in the ontological transformation which has occurred to these Christians in their baptism. They are to behave like this, not to get into God's good graces. They are to behave properly because, in baptism, they are in God's good graces.\(^{14}\)

My sermon will therefore attempt to match the movement of the text, moving from a rather tiring and dismaying catalogue of good behavior to a more poetic affirmation of the source and goal of that behavior.

Sunday August 18, 1991

*Exegesis and Exposition of Ephesians 5:14-20*

A. *Establish the Text.* I am unhappy about this fragmentary portion of the text. The *oun* ("therefore," "in sum") connects the ethical instruction and preceding theological affirmation; 6:15-20 seems related to the talk about being "children of light" (5:9) in the preceding section. Perhaps the inclusion of 5:14 in the lection would help, or even 5:1-2. At any rate, I will view my text as beginning 5:14 or earlier for purposes of interpretation.

Variants in 5:15a shift the position of "carefully" either to the beginning of the clause or to the end. It refers to the earlier discussion (5:11ff.) about proper conduct. "Spiritual songs" (5:19) seems to have been inadvertently omitted in a few manuscripts. No decisive variants can be noted in the text.

B. *Detailed study of the text.* Vs. 14b: "Awake" or "up" is the imperative of *egeire*, possibly part of a baptismal hymn. I shall include 5:14 in my text as a hymnic beginning for the following ethical imperatives.

Vs. 15a: "therefore," *oun*, is the link between the opening hymn and the succeeding verses.

Vs. 15b: The talk about "wisdom" implies that wisdom is one of the gifts of (baptismal?) enlightenment. The early fathers sometimes speak of baptism as *photismos*, "enlightenment." In baptism we wake up, open our eyes, and see true wisdom.

Vs. 16a: "redeem the time" (my translation). Use time rather than lose time (compare Col. 4:5); keep time as Christians because "the days are evil."
Vs. 18: "do not get drunk with wine." Curious, sudden reference to alcohol abuse with no apparent antecedent. Is this in reference to a specific problem at Ephesus? Perhaps this refers to the cultic use of wine (like that of the Dionysian rites). We do not know. We are to be filled with the (Holy) Spirit (vs. 18c) rather than alcoholic spirits. Once again, these ethical injunctions are related to preceding indicatives. We are to do these things because we are those who are enlightened and raised from the dead (5:14), those who are now on God’s time.

Vs. 19: Not sure about the precise nature of some of this congregational singing. Hymns are mentioned in places like Acts 2:46-47 and 1 Cor. 14:26. This fits the lyrical, hymnic quality of Ephesians.

Vs. 20: "for everything giving thanks." Or hyper panton could mean "for all men." The RSV translation is probably appropriate. Accept all things with doxological, eucharistic gratitude. Note the stereotypical liturgical ending of this verse.

General observations: There is not a great deal of material to work with in 5:14-20 if one is looking for general ideas. It is a string of detached injunctions beginning and ending in pure praise.

C. I read the text again. The passage begins with a shout, like a cheer at a football game, "Awake, O sleeper." Then it tells us to be wise, make the most of time, be filled with the Spirit rather than drunk with wine, and be filled with music and songs. I don’t want to turn this into a moralistic diatribe. How can I keep the rhythm and beat of the text in a twenty-minute sermon?

My text is full of hymns and talk about hymns. The ethical imperatives here imply that there is some relationship between a Christian’s singing and a Christian’s behavior. How can that be? Can ethics arise out of hymnody? Is there such a thing as a "hymnic life-style" (5:19)? "Making the most of the time," (16a) rings in my ears. Can our Sunday morning experience of joyous singing be seen as a model for how we are to make "the most of the time" by "making melody to the Lord with all your heart" Monday through Saturday?

D. The theme of the sermon in one sentence: Christians are those who see this time as God’s time and who therefore live their time with thanksgiving.

E. How shall I say it? Like the text, I shall begin with the evidence that "the days are evil." What is evil about the ways we spend our days? Then I shall pick up the beat, ending in a more hymnic, lyrical, doxological note. My purpose will be not so much to argue or to reason as to proclaim, to sing, to affirm what is there, to enlighten. The hymn fragment of 5:14 will be my concluding doxological assertion. The point:
Our time is redeemed when our eyes are opened and we see that God is present in our time.

Sunday, September 1, 1991

Exegesis and exposition of Ephesians 6:10-20

A. Establish the text. The division of the text in the lectionary appears logical, beginning with "Finally" (6:10). In verse 12a we again confront the variation between manuscripts on whether it is to be "we" or "you." "We" is probably the original reading, pointing to a possibly liturgical origin of this portion of the text. "We" is to be preferred as the more difficult reading. "Of the gospel" in 6:19 is not found in some key manuscripts, but most translators agree that it probably belongs to the original text. There being no other significant variants, we can accept the text as it is. Perhaps the text is better divided as 6:10-18, and yet 19-20 uses Paul as an example of one who was armed and one who endured in the manner being urged by 10-18.

B. Detailed study of the text. Vs. 10: "remaining time," or "finally." Perhaps the author has a limited period of time in mind, an eschatological perspective. Or perhaps this is simply a final summary at the end of the book. Could be "from now on," which would suggest a prolonged battle.

Vs. 10: "be strong." (Compare Eph. 3:16; Col. 1:11; Phil 4:18.) Suggests that power and fortification come from the outside rather than from inner resources.

Vs. 11a: "whole armor." Markus Barth argues that panoplia should be rendered "splendid armor" or "radiant," even "terrifying," rather than simply "whole" or "complete."16

Vs. 11b: "that you may be able to stand." The word dynamia implies the presence of power to do something.

Vs. 12a: "contest against" or "wrestle." A word derived from hand-to-hand combat.

Vs. 12b: "principalities, against the powers." Principalities and powers are the tangible, institutional, social structures of the world that are subject to the death and Resurrection of Christ. They seem invincible, but they are not. A frequent Pauline theme.

Vs. 13c: "and having done all, to stand." Is the author talking about preparation for combat or the actual victory? Probably the former.

Vs. 14b: "girded." Can mean both protected by a sword and to buckle on a sword.
Vs. 15c: "the gospel of peace." How paradoxical is this mention of peace in the midst of preparations for war! Commentators speculate that it is the peace of Christ which enables the saints to resist the principalities and powers.

Vs. 17: Exactly what is meant by "salvation" (future hope or present possession?) and how the word of God is the "sword of the Spirit" cannot be determined in this context. Must resist the temptation to allegorize this passage further.

Some general observations after study of this text: I detect three main parts here: (11-13) description of God's power to arm us in order that we may contend against the principalities and powers (14-17), listing of the six armaments which compose the armor of God (note that they are mostly defensive armaments), and a final warning to be vigilant in prayer and bold in proclamation (18-20).

My modern sensibilities are a bit offended by the use of military images to defend the "gospel of peace." The image is one of Caesar's soldiers putting on armor for combat. And yet, in Matt. 12:22-23 and elsewhere, Jesus is depicted as bringing not peace but a sword. It may be important to note that Ephesians uses the martial image in a mostly defensive role. The soldiers here are not crusaders, not participants in a holy war; they are given gifts to enable them to hold their ground. Paul's own imprisonment is given as an example of this defensive tactic (6:20).

There is no call for a church victory or a righteous crusade. Nor is there a call to summon up personal, inner strength. God is the victor, not the church. And yet, Ephesians would certainly contend, based on this text, that strong resistance against evil is one of the marks of the church.

C. Read the text again. We are obviously dealing with a church against the world, a church fighting for its survival in the midst of external hostility. How can that be related to a church full of solid citizens, including two members of the city council?

"For we are not contending against flesh and blood" (vs. 12). The foes of the church are stronger, more subversive, more organized and invincible than mere people. It is as if the foes were universal, even cosmic in their power. So we need to be honest about what we're up against and get ready to defend our ground.

I can see the text preached in El Salvador or Chile. But to preach it in Greenville, South Carolina, could either lead to deceit or delusion. Who is attacking us anymore? Who has been put in chains around here
lately? In what ways do the saints at Northside Church need to persevere and against whom?

Some type of hermeneutical "jump" must be made. We are not the same church to which these words were addressed. Christians are fighting for their lives elsewhere in the world, but not here. Perhaps this text, by implication, shows how complacent and accommodating our church has become. Perhaps, but that is not its main intention. Its intention, as I see it, is to be honest about what early Christians were up against and to urge them to be equipped to withstand the hostile forces. It was written, the author wants to say, by someone who, even then, was in chains.

D. _The theme of the sermon in one sentence: To be in the church is to be in the middle of a kind of war; therefore, we must allow God to strengthen us so that we will be able to stand firm in the battle._

E. _How shall I say it? I decide to follow the central metaphor of the text and risk using the martial imagery in my sermon. I will be guided by the question which I asked in my reading of the text: In what ways do the saints at Northside Church need to persevere and against whom? I begin my preparation for the actual writing of the sermon by listing all the ways we might be defeated, lose heart, and give up in our life as the church today. My hermeneutical assumption is that every church which tries to be the church is "persecuted," in some form or another—even though the brand of persecution we suffer may be subtle, indirect, and quiet. It is rough to be led to jail for what you believe. But we know from firsthand experience that it is also rough to be ignored or ridiculed for what you believe. The purpose of the sermon is to strengthen the saints to endure whatever kinds of persecution contemporary "principalities and powers" may offer them._

_Pastoral Application_

_THROUGHOUT MY STUDY OF THE FOREGOING TEXTS, I hope the reader sensed the continuous dialogue between a pastor and the Scripture. No effective pastor draws lines between when he or she is a pastor and a preacher. But perhaps a few specific suggestions are in order concerning ways these Epistle lections might relate to aspects of ministry other than preaching._

As I mentioned, although all Scripture is implicitly ecclesial—that is the for the church—Ephesians is explicitly so. Here is a word to the church about a faith which is primarily a way of life together among
Christ’s cherished ones. How this word challenges many of our current notions of being Christian!

For many, pastoral care is a one-to-one, psychologically-oriented, value-neutral, emotion-centered counseling. Documents like Ephesians remind me the church brings a unique gift to the task of caring for troubled or growing persons: the church itself. The support we offer is not primarily individual, situational, or professionally ministerial. We offer the resources of the Body.¹⁶

Modern pop therapies urge people to develop a "positive self-image." But the church proclaims a way of life where one is made royalty by the action of God in Christ. The pastoral concern of Ephesians is to support these chosen ones in their vocation. It knows that an individual Christian’s maturity (4:13-14) is the gift of the shared ministry of the church as a whole.

Ephesians 4:11-16 leads me to ask, How might my church look, what structures might we develop, to enable all the saints to use their gifts in the task of mutual edification and support? Is the pastor the only one engaged in pastoral care?

If the pastoral concern of Ephesians is basically ecclesial in scope, so is its ethics. (See note 12.) Lately, we have not heard much about falsehood, anger, stealing, evil talk, and slander in our church (4:25-32). These basic, everyday, communal virtues are no less important because they are out of fashion. As we liberal, mainline churches tackle the great systematic, societal sins, Ephesians reminds us that our public evil begins at home. The first, tough ethical task of the church is to discipline itself and cultivate those virtues in its life whereby the world might see the power of Christ’s saving work in the quality of our life together.

Recently at Northside Church, a meeting was held to discuss our church’s support of a number of charitable projects in our city. As far as I could tell, people were in favor of the projects. But the discussion that night was so full of cynical remarks, accusations, and petty innuendos that the chairperson was on the verge of tears. We had gone about the task of charity in a most uncharitable manner. Honesty is a fine virtue (4:25), but so are kindness and graciousness (4:31-32).

Because of its concern for getting along well in the church, Ephesians reminds me that charity does begin at home. While Christian ethics is more than a simple matter of kindness and respect for one another, it includes such simple acts as learning to act like brothers and sisters in the church. It may be tougher to love the person next to me in the pew than the person across the ocean. If I can’t love those whom I have seen, how shall I love those whom I have not seen?
The church has little right to speak to the outside world unless our world in the church is ordered according to our convictions. How does Northside Church honor the poor and the powerless? How well do we speak the truth in love? Stanley Hauerwas says (in unfortunately sexist language) "the church's first responsibility, her first political act, is to be herself... The church does not have a social ethic, but rather is a social ethic. That is, she is a social ethic inasmuch as she functions as the criteriological institution—that is, an institution that has learned to embody the form of truth that is charity as revealed in the person and work of Christ."  

Finally, Ephesians believes that the church must know who it is before it can tell the world what it is. The contemporary American church increasingly finds itself in a defensive posture—against the world.  

As a pastor of a local church, I hear more folk asking questions of Christian identity. Who are we? Where are the necessary lines between the church and the world? How can we live in the world without being taken captive by the world? In answering these questions, Christian education must have more substance than polite, middle-class liberal values. In a practical sense, in our congregation this has meant that we must take more care in our pre- and postbaptismal training. We have decided that we must be intentional about making Christians. The world will not do it for us. Matters so mundane as how we manage our time, how we guide our children in watching television, how we guard against waste and overconsumption in our homes have all become matters of concern for our congregation in recent days. We find that we must increasingly discipline ourselves in accordance with explicitly Christian values. We must do more careful thinking about what it means to be Christians here and now. We will either equip the saints here, or they will lose their way amidst the world.

So in a great sense, Ephesians is a "Pastoral Epistle." Present pastoral concerns are increasingly close to the major concerns of this letter. Come, let the preacher be bold in speaking these words of encouragement and discipline to the contemporary church so that the pastor might equip the saints as they grow in every way into Christ.
Notes

1. This was a major theme of my *Integrative Preaching: The Pulpit at the Center* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1941).


4. I am indebted to a number of interpreters for this method, though they may not recognize themselves in R. James Sanders' "Hermeneutics," *Interpretor's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), pp. 400ff. and *God Has a Story Too* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979) started me on the road to taking the audience of a text more seriously. Fred Craddock's "inductive method" of preaching, which he describes in *As One without Authority* (Abingdon Press, 1981) and *Overhearing the Gospel* (Abingdon Press, 1978), was most helpful to me. I was pleased to see that my approach to the text and context closely parallels Craddock's article "Occasion-Text-Sermon," in *Interpretation* 35 (January 1981): 59-71.


6. I therefore disagree with the commentator in the *Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 10, p. 686, who, in discussing verse 5, says that "Faith is the inward disposition of the heart, baptism the outward sign." Where is that implied here? The writer of Ephesians shows little interest in "inward disposition" except as the result, consequence, or gift of objective acts like our call and our baptism. Let us resist the modern penchant to subjectivize our sacraments, our faith, and our ethics.


9. I am indebted to Fred Craddock's "Occasion-Text-Sermon," p. 66, for reminding me of the importance of achieving a congruence between not only what the sermon says and what the text said, but also how the sermon says it and how the text says it.

10. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970). To some degree Craddock also develops this attention to form in *Overhearing the Gospel* and *As One without Authority." Preaching is truly biblical when (a) the Bible governs the content of the sermon and when (b) the function of the sermon is analogous to that of the text." Keck, *The Bible in the Pulpit*, p. 106 (emphasis added).


12. See Barth's discussion of the stripping off of clothing metaphor in *Ephesians*, vol. 34A, pp. 540-43.


New Birth Through
Water and the Spirit:
A Reply to Ted A. Campbell

Charles R. Hohenstein

In a recent issue of Quarterly Review, Ted A. Campbell has sought to articulate an evangelical critique of the baptismal rites contained in the new United Methodist Hymnal (1989), particularly "Baptismal Covenant I." Beginning with the very introduction to the rites, the new liturgy situates baptism within the context of "new birth through water and the Spirit." Campbell believes that the new rites teach, or at the very least imply, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration—the doctrine which attributes to baptism that spiritual rebirth which Jesus spoke of to Nicodemus. This, Campbell contends, will be unacceptable to many United Methodist evangelicals, who reserve the language of new birth or regeneration for the experience of conversion. Campbell argues that the evangelical rejection of baptismal regeneration is an "historic option," in the tradition of Wesley, later Methodist writers, and those Anglican evangelicals who opposed the baptismal doctrine of the Tractarians. Evangelical sensitivities should be taken into account in the implementation of the new rites and in future reforms.

I wish to offer an alternative perspective: in particular, I want to take issue with Campbell's attempt to show that the rejection of baptismal regeneration among United Methodist evangelicals is a traditional point of view. As a matter of fact, the tradition concerning baptismal regeneration is fairly clear: the orthodox Christian tradition, as it has come down to us through Scripture, the early Christian theologians, and such later writers as Luther and Wesley, generally affirms the doctrine. This is not

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of course to say that theologians within this broad tradition have agreed in every detail. The issue here is whether evangelicals can claim the general support of tradition for their rejection of baptismal regeneration, yes or no. The answer is "no." Campbell misreads the history of sacramental doctrine, especially with regard to the thought of John Wesley, and fails to give solid evidence of a consistent position concerning baptismal regeneration among evangelicals past and present. The traditional character of evangelical doctrine turns out to be a badly delineated "historic option," rooted primarily in nineteenth-century polemics and much more indebted to the impact of rationalism than Campbell recognizes.

Wesley Revisited

TO BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING, it should not be forgotten that the New Testament is the source of the contested idea of being born again (regenerated) by water and the Spirit. As a general rule evangelicals become liberal exegetes at this point, arguing that John 3:5, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 4:20 and so on cannot possibly mean what they plainly say. The New Testament writers must have really intended to describe some sort of contrast between "water baptism" and "spirit baptism"; they merely forgot to articulate the disjunction. It may come as a disappointment for evangelical Methodists to consult John Wesley's Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament concerning the passages in question, and to discover that Wesley made no such attempt to evade their application to baptism (more on Wesley below). As for the patristic literature, remarks associating regeneration with baptism are so widespread that the customary evangelical response has been to dismiss such passages as indicative of the corruption of apostolic tradition, which is to say, as Catholic. However, it is later tradition to which Campbell chiefly appeals, and since United Methodists are apt to attach special significance to his discussion of Methodist writers, I wish to pay special attention to them myself.

Campbell believes that John Wesley equivocated on the doctrine of baptismal regeneration: Wesley held that regeneration always accompanied the baptism of infants, but not so in the case of adults, and that the regeneration of infants was likely to be sinned away. Furthermore, Wesley observed "the distinction between the outward rite and the inward grace that would be maintained by later evangelicals." This simplistic and historically ignorant caricature of Wesley's position,
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which is deeply indebted to the flawed analysis of Bernard Holland, deserves a detailed reply.

Wesley's acceptance of baptismal regeneration cannot correctly be described as ambiguous if he never rejected the doctrine, and many times affirmed it. We have already alluded to Wesley's acceptance of the traditional interpretation of John 3:5, Titus 3:5, and 1 Peter 4:20 in the Explanatory Notes. When William Law allegorized the meaning of "water and the spirit" in John 3, Wesley replied in no uncertain terms:

Vain philosophy! The plain meaning of the expression, "Except a man be born of water," is neither more nor less than this, "Except he be baptized." And the plain reason why he ought to be thus born of water is, because God hath appointed it. He hath appointed it as an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, which grace is, "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness." 4

Wesley's acceptance of baptismal regeneration was most fully articulated in his Treatise on Baptism.

By baptism, we who were "by nature children of wrath" are made the children of God. And this regeneration which our Church in so many places ascribes to baptism is more than barely being admitted into the Church, though commonly connected therewith: being "grafted into the body of Christ's Church, we are made the children of God by adoption and grace." This is grounded on the plain word of our Lord: "Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John iii:5.) By water then, as a means, the water of baptism, we are regenerated or born again; whence it is also called by the Apostle, "the washing of regeneration." Our Church therefore ascribes no greater virtue to baptism than Christ himself has done. Nor does she ascribe it to the outward washing, but to the inward grace, which, added thereto, makes it a sacrament. Hence a principle of grace is infused, which will not be wholly taken away, unless we quench the Holy Spirit of God by long-continued wickedness. 5

The rites of baptism in Wesley's Sunday Service likewise make clear that he did not intend to do away with the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, although some redundant references to it were indeed eliminated. In short, Wesley's views were in the mainstream of Anglican tradition.

Any confusion about Wesley's doctrine of baptism arises from another category of evidence, namely, from remarks on other subjects which have been taken to imply a position contrary to baptismal regeneration. As Campbell points out, Wesley sometimes speaks of baptism as effectively "sinned away," as indeed at the end of the passage just cited. But in doing so he does not challenge the grace of baptism

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itself. On the contrary, it is indicative of what Roman Catholics would call a doctrine of mortal sin; in Methodism the concept certainly exists, even if the actual terminology is not used. As a matter of fact, Methodist literature is full of reproaches about the peril of the wrath to come, that sometimes come close to scrupulosity, as in the unabridged text of the hymn, "I Want a Principle Within" ("Give me to feel an idle thought as actual wickedness, And mourn for the minutest fault in exquisite distress"). Even if we were to draw the theological sense from such breast-beating, it would indicate that we have lapsed, not baptism. The same observation holds concerning Wesley's scolding of lapsed Christians in the two sermons on the New Birth, typified by the admonition to "lean no more on that broken reed, that ye were born again in baptism."

No matter how pungently Wesley may have spiced his homiletical point with references to the hypocrisy of baptized pimps and thieves, it is clear that the actual issue is not the grace of baptism, but whether one is presently in a state of grace. It is in this connection that Wesley warns that some who have been baptized must nonetheless be born again.

It is especially unfortunate that Campbell finds evidence for Wesley's equivocation on baptismal regeneration in the distinction between the outward sign and inward grace of the sacrament: "Wesley did not hold a strict doctrine of baptismal regeneration, since he consistently affirmed that the grace of regeneration does not always accompany the sacrament...Wesley cited the distinction between the outward rite and the inward grace that would be maintained by later evangelicals." In the history of sacramental theology, however, one would have to look far and wide to find a theologian in any communion who would seriously maintain that the sign and grace of a sacrament are the same thing, or that the grace of a sacrament is invariably received with the sign.

Perhaps we do well to restate a basic tradition concerning the sacraments which is shared by most of the churches, albeit with different kinds of terminology. The sacraments are efficacious as regards the promise of God, and do not rely on human initiative for their validation; nonetheless, it is within the power of free humans to resist this grace (as all but the most extreme predestinarians would affirm). The scholastic way of stating this would be that the doctrine ex opere operato (the objective effectiveness of the sacraments) is qualified by the condition non ponens obicem (no obstacle being put in the way from the human side). Thus it is indeed possible that the sign of a sacrament might in
some cases be received without the accompanying grace, but this is simply basic, orthodox doctrine.

It is true, as Campbell states, that Wesley affirms that infants are invariably regenerated in baptism, but not adults. The point is simply that infants (unlike adults) are incapable of consciously rejecting or resisting God’s grace. It has nothing to do with any notion that the grace of baptism is more certain or dependable in the one case than the other. For similar reasons it is possible that the grace of baptism might subsequently be arrested through serious sin, and require restoration through repentance, even though the sign of baptism stands accomplished and unrepeatable. It should, however, be pointed out that Wesley did not press the distinction between the sacramental sign and grace in such a manner that the two were virtually unconnected, as did in some later Methodist writers. Wesley supported a nuanced distinction between the two things, but held that “the outward sign, duly received, is always accompanied with the inward grace.” There is no support in Wesley for the common Methodist that the sacraments are “just assertion symbols.”

The main confusion about Wesley’s baptismal doctrine has to do, not with his affirmation of baptismal regeneration, but with the relation between baptism and later Christian life. Perhaps it was inevitable that Wesley’s description of two different things as the new birth (baptism and adult repentance) would lead to misunderstanding. On the other hand, the difficulty should not be exaggerated. In the Treatise on Baptism Wesley makes clear that baptism has a proleptic character, as a new beginning which anticipates and demands its own fulfillment: “Baptism doth now save us, if we live answerable thereto; if we repent, believe, and obey the gospel: Supposing this, as it admits us into the Church here, so into glory hereafter.” This, of course, is consonant with Wesley’s conception of the life of a Christian in terms of ongoing growth in grace. The very fact that Wesley calls both baptism and adult repentance the new birth probably means that, in his mind, they were two aspects of the same grand process of conversion and sanctification.

Watson: Not so Elementary

The Methodist tradition concerning baptism was further shaped by a number of theologians, including the prominent British systematician, Richard Watson (1781-1833). Campbell writes that, after Wesley, Methodist writers were “clearly evangelical” in their doctrine of baptism, and, “beginning with Richard Watson distinguished their
views from the doctrine of baptismal regeneration." I suggest that Campbell, at least in part, confuses sensitivity to the loaded words "baptismal regeneration" with clearly evangelical doctrine. As Campbell himself notes, the controversy surrounding the Gorham case had an enormous impact, and not only in England. Baptismal regeneration, already a controversial doctrine to some, now became a phrase which one could hardly use objectively. Nor is it surprising that "popular Methodist literature" consistently manifested this dread of baptismal regeneration, since the popular literature was mostly polemical in orientation. The situation is not unlike the way the word "communist" was used in the 1950s: no one could employ it casting aspersions on a person's loyalty. This hardly means that those who avoided the term adhered to the same political philosophy, however.

As a matter of fact, American Methodist baptismal doctrine in the nineteenth century was so complex that no one perspective can be said to be "clearly" dominant, evangelical or otherwise. Before one concludes that the rejection of baptismal regeneration was universal, one should make note of the fact that two of Wesley's baptismal treatises were reprinted many times in the official book of Doctrinal Tracts down to 1861; their affirmation of baptismal regeneration is quite plain. The Methodist Episcopal liturgy of baptism was revised extensively in 1864, but not so severely as to silence those who would later complain that the rites still "squinted at" regeneration. If one had to identify a general theological tendency in all of this, the best word for it would be liberal, not evangelical, and by the twentieth century this liberalism had certainly become full-blown.

Since Campbell refers to Richard Watson actually as an example of the unequivocal rejection of baptismal regeneration after Wesley, I wish to point out how far Watson actually affirms the doctrine in substance. As Campbell himself admits, Watson maintains "that baptism confers a real, efficacious grace," avoiding what is frequently called the Zwinglian extreme, and this grace is one of regeneration to those who die in infancy. For those who live to youth and adulthood, Watson stresses the importance of Christian nurture and prefers to call the grace they have received, not regeneration, but a "seed" of later Christian life. Watson probably avoids the word regeneration in the latter case because it might imply a completed transformation of the individual, as if no subsequent growth in grace were necessary. But the point is not the rejection of the concept of baptismal regeneration, but rather to make clear that a new birth—a "seed," as it were—is just a beginning in
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relation to the ongoing life of a Christian. The underlying soteriology is Wesleyan, not evangelical in the modern sense of the word.

Evangelical Tradition?

CAMPBELL WRITES THAT "many 'traditional' views of baptism certainly do not imply a doctrine of baptismal regeneration," and that "a historically significant view of baptism has been largely overlooked in contemporary Methodist discussions." But, on the basis of the foregoing considerations, I very much doubt how "traditional" or "historically significant" such a rejection of baptismal regeneration can be. In a tradition spanning two millennia and encompassing Christians all over the world, the ideas of even a few million persons within the evangelical wing of English-speaking Protestantism over the last century and a half or so do not make a particularly big splash. Even if we confine our frame of reference for "traditional" to American Christianity, the rejection of baptismal regeneration is merely one "historically significant" viewpoint among the many which have flourished here. Those who affirm the biblical and patristic doctrine of the sacraments likewise have a claim to historical significance, to say the least; in the American context, the Mercersburg movement comes immediately to mind. Even Campbell himself notes that, while many evangelicals have been engaged in a "quest for deeper Christian roots," this goal has eluded them where baptism is concerned. The reason is clear: the doctrine which is properly called traditional affirms something else, which is why most evangelicals bypass the argument from tradition, and appeal directly to Scripture instead.

In many places Campbell seems to equate tradition with "historic options" and "historically significant" alternatives. Perhaps he believes that by loosening the definition of tradition it will be easier to make his case. But there is a very great difference between calling something traditional and calling it an "historic option"; an idea is not established as traditional, much less orthodox, merely by stating that some people held to it in the past. Historical significance can be purely descriptive, but tradition is inherently more prescriptive and implies some sort of standard, or what we sometimes refer to as the "test of time." Without some criterion of apostolicity, the inclusion of "historic options" reduces to the sort of uncritical pluralism which evangelicals have rightly deplored. The "historic options" of Christianity might be said to include Carpocratian Gnosticism, the various forms of Arianism, or (more recently) Mormonism. But I trust that Campbell would join me in
distinguishing these aberrations from the authentic Christian tradition, and I doubt that he had them in mind when he wrote that "the historical options (including evangelical options) must be represented more fairly than they have been in the past"—although the incorporation of Carpocratian principles in United Methodist worship would certainly increase the inclusivity (not to mention zest) of our liturgy.

As for Campbell’s contention that evangelicals have been unfairly linked to the impact of Enlightenment rationalism, I suppose the answer will depend on how one defines "evangelical." This indeed is the problem with Campbell’s assertion that a “considerable part” of our heritage “has taken a consistently evangelical understanding of baptism.” In one sense of the word, evangelical means simply “protestant,” as when the Discipline speaks of “other evangelical churches”; this is the ordinary and usual meaning of evangelisch in German. In a more restricted sense, the word can refer to a party within the Church of England, which in the eighteenth century sought the revival of sincere and orthodox Christianity in the British Isles, in opposition to the prevailing sentiments of latitudinarianism and deism; it is on this basis that we call John Wesley an evangelical. Up to this point, at least, it would be highly problematic to identify evangelicalism with Enlightenment tendencies—Wesley regarded Hume, Rousseau and Voltaire as "infidels"—and Campbell is right to point out that the evangelical stress on the sinfulness of human nature was “hardly a pet notion among Enlightenment philosophers.”

But in modern parlance evangelical has a different meaning, and here the charge of Enlightenment rationalism is more justified. In Wesley’s time it was possible to be an evangelical and a high churchman, and indeed he described himself as both. But beginning with the nineteenth century, “evangelical” came to be identified with opposition to a high doctrine of the sacraments. In present-day American usage, although sometimes used just as a euphemism for “fundamentalist,” evangelical ordinarily describes those who believe that “getting saved” means being born again in the personal experience of conversion, in “accepting Christ.” The idea that salvation and new birth must be distanced from the mere outward rite of baptism, and deferred until the individual can make a conscious decision, is certainly rationalistic (if a little late for direct association with the Enlightenment writers of the preceding century); it also reflects the individualism and voluntarism which have marked American religious history. The identification of conversion with a decisive moment of personal decision exalts human experience and rationality at the expense of the traditional emphasis on God’s
initiative in salvation. In evangelicalism God is not permitted to regenerate infants, because they are not old enough to "know what they are doing," to choose Christ. Campbell correctly criticize the idea in which the chosen people become the choosy people.

There are some real ironies in the evangelical position: in sacramental theology, evangelicals came to adopt the principles espoused by liberals to the extent that there is little difference between the two camps in their tendency to discredit traditional doctrine as "Catholic." The other paradox is that evangelical theology makes infants capable of sin but incapable of conversion, until such a time as they can consciously "accept Christ." It is as if someone decided to combine the bleakest elements of the Augustinian and Pelagian systems: the human condition is one of weakness and depravity, and yet the responsibility for salvation is substantially in the hands of hell-bound sinners, who must make the crucial decision to accept Christ, or else. Liberals at least are more consistent: infants are unburdened by sin and therefore not needful of any conversion, other than growth in Christian nurture. Traditional doctrine is consistent also: the human condition is tainted with sin from birth, but God does not withhold the remedy of regeneration until some suitable age of discretion has been reached.

Campbell believes that evangelical sensitivities should be accommodated within the liturgy of baptism itself. I will agree that there is a practical or political issue here. Even if the rejection of baptismal regeneration has a dubious basis in tradition, there is an undeniable pastoral problem to be faced when a large number of United Methodists do reject it and must endure rites which state and imply otherwise. I suspect they will be no more satisfied than Campbell was with attempts to explain away the references to the doctrine—a mistaken strategy for liturgical authorities to pursue, in my opinion. But what is to be done? Campbell proposes that the liturgy of baptism should express a consensus doctrine which includes the views of evangelicals. But the liturgical expression of a doctrinal "consensus" which both affirms and denies baptismal regeneration at the same time would be ambivalent at best and chaotic at worst. What Campbell really appears to advocate toward the end of his article is the removal of overt references to baptismal regeneration—not as an expression of overall consensus, but in deference to evangelical sensitivities. Campbell seems willing that this be done on an ad hoc basis to the existing rites, especially in the case of "the offensive phrase in the introduction."19

There is an alternative solution. Evangelicals can accept the scriptural and traditional doctrine of baptismal regeneration and its expres-
sion in the liturgy, but define their assent by a careful statement of what they do not mean by it—they are free to reject, as Wesley did, that baptismal regeneration provides any comfort for those who persist in serious sin and faithlessness. They can accept the new birth in baptism for what it is, a beginning, and nonetheless maintain an insistence on subsequent repentance, faith and active holiness. So long as it remains clear that the initiative in the new birth is God’s, not ours, evangelicals are welcome to stress that there must be specific repentance of sin and acceptance of God’s grace on the part of the believer. Indeed, they can point to the reaffirmation of baptismal vows in the new liturgy as expressing just such an idea. But on the basis of such unconsidered grounds as Campbell has advanced, it would be unreasonable for the new liturgy to suppress the language of “new birth through water and the Spirit,” which would be to enjoin the words of Scripture and a doctrine upheld in Christian tradition.

Notes

2. Ibid., p. 38.
5. Ibid., 10: 191-192. The fact that Wesley’s Treatise was based on a work of his father is, for our purposes, irrelevant; as adapted, it expresses Wesley’s own views.
7. Campbell, p. 38.
13. Ibid., pp. 35, 36.
14. Ibid., p. 35.
15. Ibid., p. 36. The followers of Carpocrates were said to practice ritual sex within their eucharistic celebration.
16. Ibid., p. 37.
18. Campbell, pp. 36-37, 40-42.
19. Ibid., p. 42.
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