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caught up in servicing folk-religion under the pressure to find a sense of purpose in their ministry.

3. *To integrate practically evangelism and social involvement.* Though the search for a theologically responsible solution to the question of missionary priorities is urgently needed, theoretical answers are not so important as a practical demonstration, at local and national level, of a ministry which embodies personal evangelism, church planting, leadership training, service in the community, the support of those involved in political life and the media, and a prophetic testimony on the great issues of the day.

4. *To acquire skill in reading the signs of the times.* Daily life seems to be made up of two kinds of historical movement: the ephemeral, constantly changing flux of transient affairs, which flash momentarily upon our screens and then pass from view to be replaced by new actors on the stage; and the much more permanent underlying trends (religious, economic, political and cultural) which shape the future of societies. It is these latter which Christians, with the aid of what is valid biblically in the social sciences and from the perspective of revelation, ought to be discerning and evaluating critically.

5. *To renew its commitment to world evangelization.* 1980, with its two world conferences on mission and evangelism, provides a remarkable opportunity to reappraise and reconfirm our unstinted commitment to communicate the good news of Jesus and the kingdom to every living person. Today Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and China — areas where the vast majority of the world's population lives — present the greatest challenge. Latin American, North American and African churches continue to want sensitive support from other branches of the world Church. But in view of their own dynamic capacity for witness and the extent of their missionary penetration, this does not need to be so extensive as in other areas of the globe.

Missionary activity from Britain needs to turn a new corner with an appreciation of the full scope of the biblical Gospel, cultural sensitivity, real partnership, absence of all forms of triumphalism (especially the temptation to rely on massive financial support) and paternalism, a willingness to defend the rights of the powerless and underprivileged and the struggle for a more kingdom-like society. Only thus may we honour the one to whom we bear testimony and perpetuate the work of 'that great crowd of witnesses' who, before us, 'have fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith.'

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Evangelism and Power

William E. Pannell

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The restaurant was simple in decor with a faint hint of a Spanish motif. Across the blue-green grass the mist of morning slowly drifted away on the incoming breeze. We had met for breakfast, my friend, the agent for one of America's fine publishing houses and I in my role as a professor of evangelism at a west coast seminary. The pleasantries ended; I heard my friend recount his recent visit to a southern city where he had attended a meeting of one of this country's famous evangelists. "But," he said, "there were hardly any black people there. Yet, when I walked outside that immense stadium, I had the impression that the crusade was held in the heart of the city—there were black people all over the place. I can't understand that."

Well, neither can that evangelist, for if you were to ask him about this seeming contradiction he would recount the many ways he and his team had sought to involve the black community in the crusade. They would have met with the black clergymen and would have had key black persons on some of their committees. Officially the evangelist would assert that everything possible was done to ensure participation from this and indeed all minority communities. Implicit in his explanation would be a silent disappointment relieved only by the feeling that they had done all they could.

The stadium is likely to be one of the newer marvels of technology—a vast expanse suitable for football or soccer, yet completely covered at the dome. The floor of this architectural wonder is often of soft, spongy material of carpet-like feel, usually in a shade of luxurious green. The cost of such a palace, devoted to the craze for sports, is always in the millions, and those who profit from the enterprise, often the owners of those sports teams, usually find a way to do so at public expense. The land upon which this complex was built is most often public land, or land occupied by the poor in or near the central city. After it is legally condemned, the people re-located, and the area re-zoned, it is sold to these public benefactors who promise to "bring a championship to the city". The argument is usually couched in civic terms which give the impression that the enterprise will enhance the area, provide jobs, and produce additional tax revenues for the city.

To make all of this possible, it is also necessary to provide suitable access to the complex. It should be near a freeway so that the folks can get into the area from the suburbs, and preferably near bus transportation so the people from the city can get there too. After all, as the publicists will say, this is "your stadium," this is "your team". Well, not really. The cheapest seat will usually be \$10 for football. The best seats are often bought up by businessmen and corporations for their executives and important guests, with the remaining seats gobbled up by season-ticket fans.

The event mentioned by my friend was no athletic contest. It was a crusade—a religious crusade, and the faithful have gathered. It makes little difference who sponsors this event, Protestant or Catholic, cultist or internationally known evangelist. And the parable will be the same from Boston to Los Angeles. Religion will be seen to occupy the space made possible by the exploitation of the powerless. The scenario is predictable. The mayor or other high official of the city will extend a public welcome to the "evangelist," make some attempt at assessing the potential moral benefit of such a gathering and to mild applause will sit down. (Even religious folk have learned to expect little from politicians.)

The question this spectacle raises has to do with the professed faith of this crowd and the process by which this complex came into being. Where were these people when the decisions were made to condemn this property? Where were they when the powerless were relocated? When the bulldozers smashed their way through the old neighbourhood? The issue is one of ethics, and when that issue is raised among a gathered throng at a Protestant or Catholic crusade the silence is deafening.

The irony of this religious event is that the people who are the professed object of concern are not in attendance. They've been displaced by the heavy equipment of the mayor's office—often the very man who gives the opening welcome. And their absence is not due finally to their poverty. More often than not it is due to their understanding of the uncritical association between those who prefer sport to people and those who use the situation to proclaim "the Gospel".

The sad reality is that the evangelist and his entourage are often ignorant of the way in which the displaced persons view them. It could scarcely be otherwise. The evangelist is usually housed in splendid hotels, treated with a round of events sponsored by the wealthy to reach the wealthy. At the meetings they will occupy the best seats. The press and electronic media will have been courted also, and their representatives will be provided with choice space in the stadium. In short, all the agencies which serve the vested interests of the powerful will have been courted in order to give the crusade an aura of respectability. It would rarely occur to these religious leaders that these very agencies are the conduits through which flow injustice to the little people. Thus the Gospel is condemned in the eyes of many because of its associations.

POWER AND PREACHING THE GOSPEL

The issue in the minds of many people, Christians as well as nonChristians, is one of power, and it is painfully clear that those in the forefront of the evangelistic task are all too willing to use worldly power as a means of preaching the Gospel. Every secular means will have been exploited to ensure exposure and acceptance of the evangelist and his message. The social structure will have been broken down into its homogeneous units and staff persons assigned to penetrate these units for maximum exposure. The purpose is to proclaim the Gospel there, or to establish contacts suitable for prayer cells on an ongoing basis. The strategy of penetration is sophisticated and, by now, quite effective since there are hundreds of Christians scattered throughout the social structure from top to bottom—people in high places who know other people in high places, and the beat goes on.

The problem is not the strategy nor, probably, the motivation. It is really a problem of theology and of the captivity of the churches to class structures. There can be no doubt that the Church preaches the Gospel in a world increasingly divided between the few who have and the many who have not. Those who have are the "un-young, the un-coloured, the un-poor" of the world. And yet it is from this Gospel-haunted culture that most of the evangelistic energy has come—in middle-class garb, conservative and supportive of the status quo. It has sided, with nauseating consistency, with those agencies whose policies and practices tend toward more and more oppression. The problem is theological and reveals a tragic misinformation concerning both God and his people.

In his fine volume on mission, Dr. Johannes Verkuyl asserts that the fundamental difference between the God of Israel and the gods of the nations was that Jehovah really cared about the total needs of his people. According to Verkuyl:

The study of the environment in which the Old Testament was written, and the comparison of the living God of Israel with the Baalim of the neighbours of Israel throws ever clearer light

on what makes Israel's God and faith in Him, truly unique. The Baalim, nature-gods, were the gods of the status quo. Jahweh is the God of the exodus, the God of liberation.¹

This view of God is basic to any valid evangelism. God clearly intends that his people be free and this freedom must extend toward heaven and toward earth. Recall the sacred eulogy of the old man Zechariah as he celebrates the deliverance of God for his people:

... for he has visited and redeemed his people, ... that we should be saved from our enemies,
... that ... being delivered from the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in
holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

And then speaking of the coming day-spring from on high, the old man exclaimed, who "will guide our feet into the way of peace". Neither holiness before God nor the way of peace can be seen as merely personal or individual expressions of right standing with God. They are profoundly, if not fundamentally, political as well. Jesus' announcement of the "time" and the in-coming of the kingdom of God was not an attempt to be "relevant".² Rather it was the divine initiative in time and in history to offer a radical alternative to the oppression of the times. This emphasis on the kingdom is but a continuation of the divine intention revealed to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and through them to the nation ([Luke 2:29-38](#)). Clearly God is committed to his people, but his people are the vehicle through which he brings his salvation to the nations. Of great significance here is the realization that the people of God are called not only to belong to Jehovah but also to become like the God to whom they belong. Bruce is correct in asserting that "those who render allegiance to the Kingdom of God, the disciples of Jesus, are true children of this heavenly Father, and manifest this by reproducing his character."³ Bruce sees here a clear reference to [Leviticus 11:44](#), etc., in which this principle is stated, "I am Yahweh your God ..., be holy, for I am holy."

Verkuyl is especially helpful in his understanding of the divine intention for his redeemed people:

Jahweh, the slave liberator ... makes clear what his intentions are ... He intends to form a people that will live out His mercy and righteousness, a people who may in all their human relations give concrete shape and form to God's mercy and righteousness. God intends a fellowship in which God is God and people are real people, in which God and men live together in an unbreakable covenant of righteousness and love.⁴

Peter picks up the same motif in his correspondence ([1 Peter 1:15-6](#)). Thus Christian character derives from the nature of God himself. So also does Christian conduct; we are to do as God does. As Jesus is sent into the world, so are his disciples—to be as he is in the world, to complete his unfinished task.

This is basic and scarcely needs elaboration. What does need much elaboration is the view of God as bringing a salvation to the nations that is freedom from all bondage without and within, a liberation which is grounded in the holiness of God, a fulfilment of the prayer

¹ Johannes Verkuyl and H. G. Schulte Nordholt, *Responsible Liberation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

² See F. F. Bruce, *The Time is Fulfilled* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), pp.15–20.

³ *Ibid.*, p.22.

⁴ Verkuyl, p.13.

of our Lord, “thy kingdom come on earth, thy will be done, on earth, *as it is in heaven*.” This is the passion of our God. This should be the burden of his people, the hope of the saints.

Unfortunately this was never completely fulfilled, but a signal was sent into the world, and this intention has not been rescinded. Evangelism, however well-intentioned, which does not reflect this objective is incomplete and preaches only a partial Gospel of God. Evangelism as practised in most of the world today must re-capture this view of God which places him above the times in all his majesty and power, and yet *in* the times in weakness and suffering love. This twin vision must be retained for without it the Church will perpetuate the tragedy of a polarization left and right—of a false conservatism on the one hand and a false revolutionism on the other.⁵

Such a discovery will prove risky. It will result in the very situation Robert McAfee Brown promised in his address at Nairobi, i.e., a division among the people of God. It must needs happen for the whole truth is not to be found at the ends of the poles and only a clear call to repentance can bring the Church to an experience of the power of the kingdom. Here we must listen again to the Apostle ([Rom. 14:17ff](#)). The issue among us may not be food and drink previously offered to idols, but it surely is the flesh, and in this writer’s judgment the current threat is the temptation to indulge the flesh at the table of Caesar in order to win a hearing for the Gospel. The danger is that we shall succeed and the cost is that we shall have become totally irrelevant by means of our success. Salt which has lost its saltiness is of no value regardless of its brand name.

POWER AND OUR CHRISTOLOGY

The question of relevance, especially in the face of mankind’s “recent” fascination with modernity, requires a further look at our Christology. Surely the Jesus of the Gospel is not committed to the religion of domed stadia and an electronic Church! Nor is he to be confused with some latter-day guerrilla jungle-saint. It seems time for the Church to make some definite conclusions regarding Jesus. It is not easy of course, but at the least the Church could decide upon his specialness to Christianity. Hans Küng is correct. It is this quite definite person, this Christ, an “irreplaceable person with a quite definite name.”⁶ This, of course, is not all there is to the christological challenge. It is one thing for the Church to say, with Küng, that it is this Jesus—“decisive, definitive and archetypal for man’s relations with God, with his fellow man, with society”—and it is quite another thing to choose *the* Christ from all the tempting options.

Our choice must surely lie in the direction along the continuum begun in the Old Testament revelation of Jehovah as creator and deliverer. He will be personal *and* political; deeply pious yet truly human and, I suspect, graced with a sense of humour even while deeply grieved over the human condition. He will be decisive and clear about his task and about his person. He will seek not so much to be relevant to the times, but to apply himself and his message to the meaning behind the times. The world will not set his agenda, but he will be in strong solidarity with its pain and heartbreak. He may have lunch in the boardrooms but the moguls will not like what they hear. The common folk will hear him

⁵ I am greatly impressed with Helmut Thielicke’s handling of this dichotomy in his volume, *Theological Ethics*, Volume II (Fortress Press), “The Church and Politics”, pp.617–48. His view of the pastoral role of the Church in the world is especially pertinent.

⁶ Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), p.126.

gladly. He will still eschew the path of violence, but his peaceful crusade will command the respect of the politicians and their militarist lackeys. And yet, they'll crucify him one way or another.

This is precisely the point. The Christ of modernity rarely does get crucified, and neither do most of his followers. When the Church is most in command of her mission task, she is carrying a cross, not brandishing a sword. She leads from weakness not from strength; she is heard to weep and confess her sins rather than to defend her past performances as standard-bearer for the strong and powerful. It is a strange thing to note that the Church's evangelists are not being executed or assassinated in the performance of their tasks. This honour is left to the little people—to the lonely priests who pitch their hammocks in the barrios, to the compassionate laymen who are snatched from the streets and who spend their days and nights in unimagined agony at the hands of public benefactors. To preach Christ today is to live Christ today and there can be little doubt that this means a new kind of decision—a choice for the oppressed against the oppressor. It is a choice for life against death, even though it must be through death that life must come. To preach Christ today is to follow the steps of the lowly Galilean through the world's Samarias and that means a choice against the well-meant counsel of the rest of the team. It is to feel again the whiplash of the "must".

CONCLUSION

In order to preach Christ today the Church must be able to demonstrate a capacity to repent of her complicity with the world and its oppressive stratagems. The capacity for such repentance will determine the degree of her credibility to those held captive in injustice and violence. After all, without the Church's complicity—if only by its silence—such massive injustice could scarcely have spread to engulf the masses.

So in order to preach Christ with integrity the Church must also flesh out its repentance in *deeds* worthy of such contrition. It is not enough to confess with the lips. We did not talk our way into the support of injustice; we acted our way into carnal complicity. We must now act our way out. The Church must perform by publicly denouncing injustice as sin with the same fervour as it has spoken out on such issues as, for instance, pornography, Communism, and the absence of prayer in the public schools. The Church's evangelists must name names and call injustice by its rightful name—sin. It is clearly time to mix church growth with the clear call for justice; to stop pretending that we can do the former apart from the latter and still maintain the integrity of the Gospel. The evangelist must become a modern Ezekiel. He must hear Jehovah say "Behold ... your doom has come, injustice has blossomed, pride has budded. Violence has grown up into a rod of wickedness; none of them shall remain, nor their abundance, nor their wealth. Neither shall there be preeminence among them." And what is it that occasioned such an outburst from God? The very stuff that headlines our daily newspapers—violence, injustice, idolatry, the exploitation of the widows and orphans by corrupt legal systems, kickbacks, extortion by the use of exorbitant interest on loans in the name of good business practice, etc., etc. "The land is full of bloody crimes and the city is full of violence" ([Ezek. 7:10–2, 23](#) RSV). The point of all this is that God charges his people with this condition. Somehow the Church's evangelists must translate this message to the people of God in this time. Evangelism without repentance for our complicity with these bloody crimes is not good news.

To repent is also to make an announcement, to declare that a choice has been made to abandon the perquisites of privilege and to support actively the struggle of those yet in

bondage. It is to move out of our cozy homogeneous units and to identify with those issues which promise freedom. It seems to me that this is the only way the Church can validate its claim that Jesus frees and unites. The Church must be set free; the Church must be united; the Church must be born again for others.

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The Breakthrough Counselling Centre

Philemon Yuen-Wan Choi

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Interest in counselling is relatively new in the Chinese church. According to Dr. Choi, up to six or seven years ago, Bible colleges and seminaries offered no courses in pastoral counselling. Literature on the subject, apart from translations from English, has been in short supply. A 1978 survey of pastors in Hong Kong revealed that the majority spend 50–70 per cent of their time in administrative duties, while spending only 10–20 per cent of their time in counselling. While this is in part due to a disproportionately heavy work load, 70 per cent of the pastors surveyed felt they did not have sufficient training for a counselling ministry. But there are signs that the picture is changing. In Taiwan, Christians have established telephone counselling, family counselling and youth counselling services for the community. In 1976, C. Y. Kau, a seminary professor of practical theology, wrote An Introduction to Pastoral Counselling (Taiwan: China Evangelical Seminary, 1976) in Chinese. In Hong Kong, which Dr. Choi says still lags behind Taiwan in the area of counselling, the Fellowship of Evangelical Students established the Breakthrough Counselling Centre in 1975 as a form of outreach. The following is a description of the Centre by Dr. Choi, its current director and director of Breakthrough Magazine. It is the second half of his booklet, Counselling—A New Frontier in Asia, available as No. 24 of the Asian Perspective Series from Asia Theological Association, P.O. Box 73–119 Shihlin, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC 111.

(Editor)

Most Christians are aware of counselling as a ministry within the Church, but few have considered the possibility of using counselling as a means of outreach. Recently, this idea has become acceptable to the Christians in North America. In a survey, a substantial majority of evangelical Christians, both pastors (90 per cent) and laymen (80 per cent), believe that providing (or supporting) professional counselling would be a visible ministry of their church.¹ In Asia, this concept is still in the experimental stage. The Breakthrough Counselling

¹ King, R. R. Jr. "Evangelical Christians and Professional Counselling: A Conflict of Values?", *Journal of Psychology*, Fall 1978, 6(4), p.279.