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to listen to what the Lord in his Word has to say to us in our day. At this point I would like to recall the well-known words which John Robinson said to the Pilgrim Fathers in 1690: 'I am absolutely convinced that the Lord has other truths to impart to us through his Holy Word'. He then went on to warn against pure traditionalism. 'The Lutherans can see only what Luther saw; they would die rather than accept a certain aspect of the truth revealed to Calvin. As for the Calvinists, they cling to the heritage left them by that great man of God, who, nevertheless, did not know everything'.³³ As Evangelicals too we are often inclined to cling to our own traditions and to judge others by them. Likewise we often judge the churches to which we belong by the same standards. And in the meantime we go our own individualistic ways, ignoring our calling to work towards the reformation of the church.

I am very happy indeed that Evangelicals are waking up to this calling. Perhaps we do not yet know what we ought to do. But the main thing for the moment is the realization that we have to act. Some p. 57 people believe that we have to wait for a crisis before we can act. I beg to disagree with this. If we are waiting for a crisis before we act, the crisis may never come, because crises only come when the trends of the day are opposed by action.³⁴ We must not sit down and wait in an attitude of mere passivity. Let us be active in obedience, having a strong confidence in the Lord. We are not alone. He will guide us by his Spirit. We have his promises which are sure. If only, yes, if only we on our side, obey his word and do what He tells us in his Word! May the Lord give us the grace to be obedient without question, to be confident without doubt, to go forward without hesitation!

Dr. Klaas Runia is Professor of Pastoral Theology at the Theologische Hogeschool, Kampen, Netherlands. p. 58

The Church in Papua New Guinea Change and Continuity

Joshua Daimoi

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The author gives a helpful survey of the tension between change and continuity in the life of the emerging churches in a newly independent country whose society is confronted with enormous social, religious and political pressures. He has some perceptive comments on the shift in role of the western missionary from being a participant to becoming a spectator.

(Editor)

³³ Cf. Kuen, *op. cit.*, 314.

³⁴ Taken from a statement of one of the Leicester Conferences in the sixties. Cf. my *Reformation Today*, 143.

No Papua New Guinean can forget the joy, the excitement, the strong emotional feelings that marked the birth of the 'Independent State' of Papua New Guinea, on 16 September 1975. I will never forget the feeling of pride, joy and deep thankfulness to God as I stood with thousands of others in Port Moresby to mark the official birth of Papua New Guinea.

The nation is now going on eight years old. I wish to speak about the work of the church in this time of change and continuity in our national life.

There are *six* main areas I want to direct attention to:

1. National Churches and Overseas Missionaries,
2. National Policies and Church Work,
3. Weaknesses in the Church at Present,
4. Christian Ways and Ways of our Forefathers,
5. The Church and its Mission,
6. The Next *Ten* Years.

I NATIONAL CHURCHES AND OVERSEAS MISSIONARIES

The phrase 'national churches' is used to represent member churches of the Evangelical Alliance known by such names as: Apostolic Christian Church, the Assemblies of God, the Baptist Union of Papua New Guinea, Christian Brethren, Churches of Christ, Evangelical Church of Papua, the United Church (Highlands Region) and others.

I am using the term 'overseas missionaries' with reference to church workers from countries other than the neighbouring Pacific Island countries. My reason for making this distinction is because Pacific Islanders are more readily accepted by Papua New Guineans than missionaries from other countries. [p. 59](#)

In some places I use the word 'Church' to represent the 'community of faith' or the 'people of God', meaning all the different churches in Papua New Guinea.

One great change we have seen in Papua New Guinea since independence is in the area of leadership. No one can tell what will happen in a newly independent country. Because of this many foreigners, including missionaries, left the country before and soon after independence. Some foreigners went because they believed that Papua New Guineans are the right people to run the affairs of their nation. Many experienced missionaries returned home because they saw independence as meaning the handing over of church work to nationals. I do not think this is the only reason for their going home; if it is, then they made the biggest mistake in their missionary work. They have moved out of the will of God by not remaining and struggling with their national brothers and sisters in the work of building up the Church of God in Papua New Guinea.

We need to find an answer to a second problem related to overseas missionaries. This concerns missionaries who are still with us. In many cases missionaries who are still in New Guinea are becoming more and more 'spectators' rather than active 'participants' in the life of the church. Many times we hear comments such as 'It is your problem. You are the national person. You do it. It is the problem of the church, not the mission'.

Missionaries are not entirely to be blamed for thinking and acting as spectators. As guests in PNG they can be excused for thinking and acting as they do. Much of what they do and say is done in response to the attitudes and feelings of their hosts. So we nationals are directly responsible for the problems stated above. Many times we hear nationals say, 'This is my country' ... '*Em i pasin bilong mipela*' ... 'You foreigners' ... 'This is not your country' ... 'You racists' and other phrases. What disturbs me is that these

phrases are used by those of us who are born-again Christians. We cannot therefore blame the missionary for being unsure in what he should say or do.

The problems I have outlined help to create other problems. Instead of listening to the Word of God we listen to the voices of culture and of the national. We become conscious of what men say rather than what God says. We see things as men see, not as God sees them. This leads us to make a further mistake. Instead of appointing the right person for the job (national or expatriate) we appoint any national to the position because we must have a national. As a result the work suffers, people become unhappy, and those appointed to the job—if they have not been properly trained or prepared—become frustrated, inefficient [p. 60](#) and before long they leave the work. We blame them for being ‘unspiritual’.

How do we overcome these problems? There is not one answer but many. Let me suggest a few. One thing we need is to accept each other and be open to each other as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. For us as Christians, God is our Father. One day we will be with him. Let us practice this truth across all barriers of culture, colour, race and politics while we are still on earth. Acceptance of one another means openness toward one another. We need to be prepared to allow other persons to see us as we are, to correct us, to rebuke us. We should be prepared to have fellowship with each other, to make allowance for each other’s views and to forgive each other.

A second answer to the problem is, we should let missionaries be pastors, chairmen or presidents and leaders of churches and other institutions in PNG. We should submit to each other as we submit to the Lord.

My third suggestion is that we should listen to the Word of God more as a ‘community of faith’ and not just as individuals. Many of the problems we face will best be solved when, as a community of God’s people, we study God’s Word together.

II NATIONAL POLICIES AND CHURCH WORK

The church in any nation is called to live under two sets of laws—the laws of the country and the laws of God. The relationship between church’s loyalty to God and to the country for certain cases is well summed up by Jesus when he said, ‘... pay the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor and, pay God what belongs to God’ ([Mt. 22:21](#)). The context in which Jesus spoke these words makes it very clear that Christians have duties to fulfil to the government for what the government does for the people. Jesus spoke about paying taxes. All of us, Christians and non-Christians, must pay taxes so that the necessary work of the country can go on. It is wrong to ask whether or not a Christian should pay taxes. Here, we have no conflict between our loyalty to God and to the government.

There are; however, times and situations when we are called to be loyal to God rather than to human authority. We have a clear example of this in Acts chapter four. The authorities in Jerusalem had Peter and John arrested for healing a lame man ([Acts 3:6](#)) and teaching the people in the name of Jesus. The authorities knew there was nothing they could do to stop Peter and John preaching for Jesus. In order to stop the matter from spreading any further among the people, they [p. 61](#) decided to warn Peter and John not to speak to anyone in the name of Jesus ([Acts 4:17](#)). In reply, Peter and John answered, ‘You yourselves judge which is right in God’s sight—to obey you or to obey God. For we cannot stop speaking of what we ourselves have seen and heard’. ([Acts 4:19–20](#)). As soon as they were released, they reported the matter to the church and the church reported it to their authority. Part of the church’s report reads; ‘And now, Lord, take notice of the threats they have made, and allow us your servants, to speak your message with all boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal, and grant that wonders and

miracles may be performed through the name of your Holy Servant Jesus' ([Acts 4:29–30](#)). Here we see that the whole community of believers prayed to God to permit them to do the opposite to what the authorities demanded. God approved what they asked because in the next verse we read: 'When they finished praying, the place where they were meeting was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim God's message with boldness' ([Acts 4:31](#)).

The key issue here is centred around Jesus Christ—who he is and what he has done and is doing. Jesus Christ came into the world to save mankind, including the authorities in every nation. The Gospel message is for everyone. The preaching of this message must continue until Jesus returns. Jesus commissioned his disciples to do this ([Mt. 28:18–20](#)).

State and Church Relations

What does this tell us in relation to our freedom of conscience—our freedom to express our particular convictions? We who are Christian Melanesians need to be very careful that we do not call on the government to solve matters that belong to the church. Further, we must not allow private matters to become public affairs. If we do not agree with a particular belief or conviction or practice of a brother or sister—regardless of his or her nationality—we must allow such a person the freedom he or she is allowed by our constitution. And of course every person is entitled to his or her opinion. If we, as brothers and sisters in Christ, cannot settle our differences or allow each other freedom then there is something wrong with us.

This leads to my next point, that in matters relating to church doctrine or religious beliefs it is wise for the government not to interfere. The government, or the laws of the country, are not specifically designed to judge doctrinal matters.

Having said this I must also warn missionaries and church workers that freedom of conscience does not mean abusing the constitution of [p. 62](#) the country. While the government may not be able to judge us on doctrinal grounds, we know that we stand under judgement all the time. We are not free to teach what we like; we are only free to declare what God's Word says. This was Paul's personal conviction when he wrote 'We put aside all secret and shameful deeds; we do not act with deceit, nor do we falsify the word of God. In the full light of truth we live in God's sight and try to commend ourselves to everyone's good conscience' ([2 Cor. 4:2](#)).

Church and Government Co-operation

One other thing to think about in relation to national policies is the question of national security. This is a very sensitive issue and one that the government is best qualified to handle. In a developing country we are faced with all kinds of dangers both from inside and outside. We must watch against political, economic and religious manipulation from outside. We also need to watch against personal interest and ambitions on the part of leaders both in the government and the church. It is easy to make rules about what we should do with outsiders or foreigners. It is not so easy to apply the same rule to ourselves. It is possible to allow corruption and personal gain to be carried out under the guise of 'national security'. This is the price Uganda had to pay under the dictatorial rule of Idi Amin. For this reason I believe the church must not allow the government to interfere with its work. We must not sacrifice our religious freedom for the sake of our little misunderstandings and personal problems. If we surrender to Caesar what does not rightly belong to him, we ought to be prepared to pay the high cost that goes with it.

There is one very good national policy that we church people appear to be slow in responding to. This is the policy that relates to equal distribution of wealth. In practical terms this means the government is supposed to assist with development in rural areas.

The best way for us to know what the government can or cannot do is to work closely with our provincial governments. The provincial governments are the 'hands' of the national government. The provincial governments are in the best position to know whether or not a certain national policy can be carried out.

Because Evangelical Alliance churches are for the most part in the rural areas it is up to us to work closely with the government. In the past we in the E.A. Churches have done very little in business and economic development because these did not seem to be 'spiritual' work. All of us know we cannot cut up life into little parts marked p. 63 Religion, Social, Economic, Political. Life is made up of all these parts. We cannot become truly self-supporting churches if we do not take up seriously the question of economic development. For instance, agricultural students from the Christian Leaders' Training College (CLTC) receive very little support from their people or pastors during their twelve-month practical work. It would seem that the institutional church and some of its workers do not see the relevance or value of this work, yet for the students it is of great importance whether or not they develop skills which will improve their quality of life, or join the vast pool of unemployed. Are we a serving church only in the spiritual realm, or a caring and serving church to the whole man?

III WEAKNESSES IN THE CHURCHES

The majority of Evangelical Alliance churches have a mission history that extends no more than thirty years. Real development in national leadership started probably some fifteen years ago. The majority of our church leaders at present are men whom we have taught at CLTC in the last fifteen years. There were national church workers before that time, but because the older pastors have had very little formal training, their contribution is very limited.

Are CLTC students prepared to handle the many demanding problems of pastoral work to which they go? As one who has the joy of teaching these students, I can answer that we do our best in preparing them. The fact that many of them are still in the ministry is a real encouragement to us.

When we look at the responsibilities the graduates get thrown into immediately they leave the College we wonder what it is that enables them to survive. It is obvious that God is faithful and does that for which he calls them ([1 Thess. 5:24](#)). Some CLTC graduates have told me that while CLTC gave them good Bible training and other practical training, they did not know how to be administrators, circuit pastors, how to write business letters, or how to handle a treasurer's work. We know that many of them are occupying these positions and are handling them as well as they can. There are also many who cannot handle them. This is one of the causes of weaknesses in our churches.

Different Voices Pull Church Leaders

Another cause of weakness is related to personality. If we are honest we will admit that all of us have our secret ambitions. Some of us use church work not only for what God wants us to do but also to carry out p. 64 our own plans and ideas. All national churchmen seem to work under four kinds of programmes. There is the programme that the Lord sets. There is the programme the church sets. There is the programme our tribe or *wantoks* set. There is the programme that I set for myself. These four different voices can be grouped into two—the voice of the church and the voice of the tribe. The voice of the church is usually in line with what the Lord wants me to do. The voice of the tribe often controls my own voice or wish. Unless I am strong and mature spiritually, then his will often gives way to my way or the way of my tribe. This happens very easily because

I see my people and feel their concern, so I respond to them. I do not see Jesus Christ, I do not hear him in the same way I hear my people's voices (depending on whether I read the Bible). Therefore I cannot feel his concern; I can ignore him and do what my people want first. I take my people's voice as his voice but if something goes wrong then I know it was not the Lord's will.

One of my deep concerns is that many of the men trained for church work are going into politics—the national and provincial governments as well as local government councils. I am not against Christian involvement in politics. We should encourage more of the *right* kind of Christian to go into this work. The fact that a person is a Christian does not necessarily mean he is the right one to go into politics. Because a person proves to be a very good pastor or effective leader in his community, it does not necessarily follow that he will make a good politician or effectively handle national or international issues.

The question of 'national security' that I have spoken about is very important here also. The people who go into national and provincial governments need to understand and be able to handle national and international issues. They need to be able to educate themselves in these areas if they have not had that kind of education.

Pastors Have Important Development Role

The first thing I want to say to pastors who are moving into politics is, be very clear about your motives as to why you want to be in politics. Second, make sure that it is the Lord who wants you to be there and not yourself. Third, see if you have had the right kind of preparation for the work; for example, do you know what is in our national constitution? How many books on politics or national issues have you read? Fourth, What is wrong with pastoral work? Many of you do not receive much pay. But, is that sufficient reason to go into politics? Let me respectfully say that the work of a pastor is far more important than that of a politician. The pastoral ministry is important because in this ministry **p. 65** you are called to prepare people for this life *and* the life to come. Christianity, we know, is not concerned with heaven only. It is concerned with life here on earth as well. In a so-called Christian nation we still have fighting, killing and hatred. The only person who can solve these problems is Jesus Christ. He who now rules from heaven has sent his Holy Spirit into the world. Everyone who believes in him and accepts him into his life possesses the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who lives in the Christian produces in him love instead of hatred, fellowship instead of fighting, peace instead of killing. Pastors, therefore, have a very important work to do in the building up of our new nation.

We also know that in PNG today there are many misunderstandings between different churches and between the churches and the government. The people who can best help solve these problems are those who have been trained theologically, who know what the Bible says and means. Many of our Christian people do not know what the Bible teaches. If our best qualified pastors go into politics, who is going to teach the people or represent their cases to those in authority?

IV CHRISTIAN WAYS AND NATIONAL CULTURE

In most of his letters Paul described the churches as 'the church of God' or 'the people of God' in a given place. Paul said 'This also includes you who are in Rome, whom God has called to belong to Jesus Christ' ([Rom 1:6](#)). Writing to Corinth Paul said, 'the church of God which is in Corinth' ([1 Cor 1:2](#), [2 Cor 1:1](#)). He said, 'to God's people in Ephesus' ([Eph 1:1](#)). To Philippi he wrote, 'to all God's people in Philippi' ([Phil 1:1](#)). These expressions

tell us who the people are and where they live. The mention of 'Corinth', 'Philippi' and so on tell us that Christians who live in these places need to plan and organize their church or community life in the way that is suitable to their particular situation. Their oneness in Christ makes them one with Christians in other places. But because they belong to a particular place they need to express their life and faith in Christ in ways that are most natural to them. They do not have to copy the way of worship, or their form of church government, from other places. They ought not to allow foreign worship and community patterns to dictate to them. They ought to be free to run their church work in ways that are natural to them.

There are many good things in PNG culture that ought to be encouraged and developed if the church is to be 'the church of God' here. The way we sing, worship, and conduct business meetings does not have to be the same everywhere. p. 66

After experiencing the freedom Christ offers we do not have to be slaves of a particular pattern. The death of Christ has redeemed all things, including our cultural heritage. We are saved by Christ in a given culture. When we give our lives to Christ as his servants we also offer to him our cultural heritage. Our lives and our culture come under Christ's direct lordship. Christ as Lord of our lives and cultures is responsible for what we ought to keep and what we ought to put away.

Submit to Bible in Context

It is not easy to decide what Christ approves. Christ does not shout to tell us what we should do. The way to discover his will is to search for it in the Bible. Our submission to Christ's Lordship includes our submission to the authority of the Bible. Submission to the Bible does not mean that we blindly accept everything it says without examining the historical, cultural and ethical questions associated with the text. Just because the Bible talks about a certain issue does not mean that we automatically approve it or follow what it says. The Bible has many warnings as well as teachings for our good. Warnings are there to stop us from doing the same things or making the same mistakes. Teachings are given in the Bible for us to take in and obey.

The phrases 'in Rome', 'in Corinth', etc, as well as encouraging us to keep what is good in our culture, stand as a warning also. 'In Rome', 'in Corinth' Christians and non-Christians live together and do many things together. Christians must always remember that the honour of Jesus Christ is dependent on them. They have to be in the world but not of the world. They must stand firm for those things which clearly honour Jesus Christ.

Much PNG Culture is Little Changed

This leads me now to look at the statement which we often hear: 'the missionaries have spoiled our culture'. Two questions immediately come to mind. The first is, 'What is culture?' The second question is, 'What part of the culture have the missionaries spoiled?'

Culture can be broadly defined as 'our whole way of life'. This whole way of life is made up of religious, social, economic and political aspects. These four big areas of life include smaller ones, for example, language, ceremonies, social duties, the social structure which includes leadership, family, clans, tribes; carving, which includes tools, weapons, drums, figures. There is clothing, fishing, hunting, housing, gardening, legends, songs. There are regional beliefs, which p. 67 include spirits, magic and sorcery. There are world-views which include our beliefs about the world and man.

In many of these areas very few changes have taken place. Most of these changes are for the good. When we look at hunting, very little change has taken place. Men still go

out into the bush to hunt. Instead of hunting with bows and arrows some use shotguns. Is this good or bad? What about gardening? The only change is that people use spades and steel axes instead of digging sticks or stone axes. Not many of us would be happy to go back to sticks and stone axes.

What about houses? In some places, especially in coastal areas, many houses are built of galvanised iron with sawn boards. In most of the highland areas people still build their houses from *kunai* grass and *pitpit* as they had always done before. No one can say that what the coastal people do is not cultural or that the highlanders must change their housing.

What about our social structures? Again, missionaries have not changed these patterns. We still have our traditional chiefs, we still live in tribes and clans in the villages as our fore-fathers lived.

What about our traditional songs? There have been changes in some areas. In other areas Christian nationals decided against traditional songs because some of these convey wrong thoughts and ideas to people. This kind of change is bound to take place. Christianity which is centred in Jesus Christ brings change into all areas of life, including the meaning of the words in the songs we sing. We cannot blame the missionaries for this. If anyone is to be blamed, the blame must rightly go to Christian nationals.

When we come to clothing we know that great changes have taken place that cannot be altered. I can clearly remember that up to the age of five or six years I was running around naked in our village. It was not until I started school that I had to learn to keep something on my body. Now I don't think I would feel comfortable without being appropriately dressed. I can also remember the great trouble my wife and I went to when we expected our first-born. Our children don't know what it means not to have clothes on. They would feel deeply hurt if someone told them to go to school naked or dressed in leaves, because neither is part of their culture.

When we look at our languages we become very conscious of the great contribution missionaries have made to preserve them. Thereby they preserve a very important part of our culture. But we also know languages change very quickly. It is not the missionary's fault that languages change.

What I have said so far appears to present missionaries as angels. I p. 68 appear to be saying that missionaries made no mistakes or never spoiled our culture. Many overseas missionaries would readily agree that as foreigners they brought with them ideas and ways of life that are alien to Papua New Guineans. This is natural and very human. They have come to us, bringing the Gospel in the way understood by them. None of us can dissociate ourselves from the culture in which we grew up. European thought patterns are different.

Missionaries Brought Two Main Changes

I can think of at least two major areas in which missionaries are responsible for changes in the culture of our people. One of these was inevitable. The other one could have been avoided had the missionaries been more careful or more clear about their coming to Papua New Guinea.

First, the inevitable change. That has come whenever the Gospel is preached, regardless of the missionary's nationality or cultural background. Missionaries, as agents of the Gospel, did a great deal to change Melanesian 'spirituality'. The Gospel delivered many of our forefathers from superstition, magic and sorcery. The missionaries did not produce this change. They neither knew how nor possessed the power to bring about these changes. It is the Gospel that brought these changes into our society. Paul was clear about this when he said 'I have complete confidence in the

Gospel; it is God's power to save all who believe, first the Jews and also the Gentiles' ([Romans 1:16](#)). We need to distinguish between the messenger and the message. If we are unhappy about the change in our belief system then our blame should be directed to God, not to the missionaries.

Many of us who easily criticize missionaries would not want to return to the magic, sorcery, fear and superstition of our forefathers. Our ancestors used magic and sorcery to obtain power from beyond themselves to control and manipulate their destiny. The success of it depended greatly on the use of the right rituals and formulas. Christianity is far superior to the ways of our forefathers because it is centred in Jesus Christ, our living Lord and Saviour. He stands over and above all powers, rulers and spiritual authorities. We do not have to use special rituals or formulas to make contact with him. We can speak to him in any language and he will hear us. He hears us and knows our thoughts and words before we call on him because, 'in him we live and move and have our being' ([Acts 17:28](#), RSV).

The other change missionaries have brought is related to families tribes and clans being separated from each other. In Some of our p. 69 villages different churches work in competition with one another. Instead of bringing unity and harmony to the village, division is introduced. This is not the Work of the Gospel, this is the work of men. This is not preaching Jesus Christ; it is preaching 'churchism' or denominationalism. In this way missionaries take their own names to villages, not Jesus' name. They go there to make followers for themselves rather than for Jesus Christ. If we must win people's confidence by a slight twist of the Gospel or by disregarding the good work done by others we cannot regard ourselves as Christians, we cannot clearly say we are here to serve Christ.

Now, missionaries are not the only ones deserving blame for this mistake, Some big troubles and divisions have been caused by Christian nationals. Some of us Christian nationals think that our particular denomination is the only one which preaches the truth. I say, let us be united and stop confusing our own people.

V THE CHURCH AND ITS MISSION

We have seen that Paul addressed Christians as 'the church of God' or 'the people of God' ([1 Cor. 1:1](#); [2 Cor. 1:2](#); [Phil. 1:1](#); [Col. 1:2](#)). He used these phrases to remind his readers of the one true God to whom they belong and of their responsibility to him. The word 'church' in most of Paul's letters is used to describe local congregations. All local congregations belong to God. God is personally responsible for every believer in a local congregation.

God has shown his responsibility for local congregations and believers by doing four specific things:

a. *God has made Jesus Christ Head of the Church*

In [Ephesians 1:21-23](#), Jesus Christ is described as the 'head of the Church'. Jesus Christ is not like the chairman or president of a meeting who sits at the head table, listens to all the arguments, tries to control the meeting and approves the motions. As 'head of the Church' Jesus Christ makes decisions by himself without consulting anyone. He is the source of the Church's strength, wisdom and righteousness ([1 Cor. 1:18](#), [23](#), [24](#), [30](#)). Because of who Jesus Christ is, the Church, which is his body, must carry out whatever he decides.

b. *God has made the Holy Spirit the Director of the Church*

The Holy Spirit is given to the Church to direct its work and witness ([1 Cor. 2:10-16](#)). The Holy Spirit does this by giving different spiritual gifts to different people ([1 Cor. 2:10](#), [11](#)). He reserves the absolute p. 70 right in determining the type of gift each

Christian should receive ([1 Cor. 12:11](#)). It is the work of the Holy Spirit to teach Christians ([John 15:26](#); [1 Cor. 2:13-16](#)). The Holy Spirit's primary work is to glorify Jesus Christ ([John 16:12-15](#); [1 Cor. 12:3](#)).

c. *God has given His Word to Guide the Church*

God is responsible for the content of the Bible. He is the primary author of the Bible. His thoughts, his will, his plans are clearly set out in the Bible. The people of God are not asked to dream up messages or look for special signs to show them as to what part of the Bible is important to preach on. All of the Bible is important, all of it must be carefully taught and preached to the people.

d. *God has given Workers to Serve the Church*

Christians are God's gift to the Church, to do his work. Every Christian is therefore a gift to the Church and a member of the Church. Every Christian is saved to serve ([1 Cor. 3:5](#), [4:1](#), [12:28](#), [Eph. 4:11](#)).

Thus we see that God, not man, is the owner of the Church. The Church is responsible to carry out the mission of God. This means that if a local congregation is to be effective and fruitful to God it needs to keep a daily, living fellowship with him. Believers need to meet daily around the Word of God to receive instructions, encouragement, and fresh challenge.

The Church which lives in daily fellowship with God around his Word will continually know God's mission for the world. Since the Church belongs to God, sits under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, submits to the direction of the Holy Spirit and his Word, it becomes concerned with everything that concerns God. This concern of God is clearly stated by our Lord in [Luke 4:18-20](#). This passage tells us that the mission of the Church involves:

- bringing good news to the poor,
- bringing freedom to the captives,
- bringing sight to the blind,
- bringing the good news of eternal salvation to all.

This passage tells us that the Church's mission to the world involves the whole of man and not just part of him. The total Gospel must be presented to the total man for a total commitment to God. Thus the Church which is committed to Jesus Christ must busy itself at all levels of human need. p. 71

VI THE NEXT TEN YEARS

No one can accurately predict what the next ten years will bring. Whether our Lord returns or not, our main task is to keep busy until he comes. We should set certain targets to work toward. We must work and pray for we do not know the hour nor the day when our Lord will come. Let me suggest a few such targets:

i. *Discovering each other in Jesus Christ*

Let us remind ourselves again that the Church of Jesus Christ is bigger than the particular local congregation or Church group we belong to. We must work together to express the unity we have in Jesus Christ across all the different groups we represent. Working together means:

- effective use of the resources God has given to us,
- completion of work in shorter time,
- sharing of burdens.

ii. *Caring for the Christians*

In [1 Cor. 3:9](#) Paul uses the pictures of a garden and a building for the church. He said ‘... you are God’s field. You are also God’s building’. A garden and a building need constant attention. Many Christians in our churches and people of our nation are searching for directions for their lives. I suggest that we develop a series of small booklets of between [10](#) and 20 pages on such themes as:- The Christian Politician, The Christian Business Man, The Christian Accountant, The Christian Soldier, The Christian Family, The Christian Student; Caring for Vehicles, Caring for Coffee, Caring for the Soil, Caring for Animals.

iii. *Strengthening Church Leadership*

If we are serious about the life of our churches then we need to strengthen those who are pastors and leaders. We can do this by combining seminars on leadership and pastoral care at the provincial level. Suitable handbooks can be developed out of these seminars.

iv. *Reaching the Unreached*

The church must continually remind itself that its primary task is to go out and make disciples of all nations. We must plan for evangelistic meetings in every way we can. Whatever we do we must coordinate our activities properly. [p. 72](#)

CONCLUSION

Much of what is presented here represents the deep concerns of my own heart. There is much I have not touched on, but I present this in the hope that, whether you agree or disagree with me, it will spark a response in you, and further thought and discussion will take place as a result.

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Witness of a Suffering Church: The Chinese Experience

Jonathan Chao

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The author argues that suffering is central to the theological and missiological understanding of the Church. He traces the role of suffering in the experience of the Church in China since 1949 and pinpoints the years of revival and unbelievable Church growth. However, the article raises a number of important issues that need further elucidation. A wider definition of suffering is needed. Is it restricted to constraints imposed by an anti-Christian society or are there other realms of suffering experienced by those who live in affluent, free but morally corrupt societies? Is the dichotomy between the institutional church and the house church movement essential to the nature of the Church or is it