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particular and the universal, to the mutual enrichment of all and to the glory of Him who is the Head of his one body, which is the Church.

Professor D. J. Bosch teaches Missiology at the University of South Africa. [p. 261](#)

A Letter to the Editor The Homogeneous Unit Principle

Charles R. A. Hoole

The importance of Donald McGavran's article (Oct. '83) lies in its description of an actual situation. But it is not a new situation. Protestant churches have been operating along these lines for a long time. Yet I find McGavran's De Nobili solution totally unacceptable. As René Padilla has shown with clarity, that it is contrary to the New Testament view of Church. In addition, there are sound ethical grounds for rejecting McGavran's recipe.

The De Nobili solution assumes that a believer can continue in faith as a private being, living his life in the quiet chamber of a devotional relationship to God. This faith doesn't have reference to the whole of reality in which the believer finds himself, including that of his work, and of political, social and economic life, where most people experience their real problems of conscience, their conflicts and personal difficulties. The De Nobili solution therefore ignores the liberating significance of the Gospel for all these dimensions of life. Isn't the believer then in danger of succumbing to schizophrenia? As indicated in case history I., the believer must live a life that is divided into two separate compartments. In his private life he will be a believer living, as it were, supernaturally in a kind of superworld. But as a man of the world he will follow the laws of the world. Even if such a precarious balance could be maintained by the practice of 'double morality' (Troeltsch), it remains a highly unsatisfactory solution. There are, however, dangers inherent in this position that leads the believer along the downward path.

Indeed the De Nobili solution had led to all manner of perversions of Christian faith. Are we to be reminded of Karl Barth's characterization of the typical eighteenth century man in Europe as one who was pious at home but hunted slaves abroad? (Barth, Nineteenth century Theology). While allowance should be made for Barth's polemics, the memories of the Nazified 'German Christian' of the Third Reich are too vivid to be forgotten. The 'German Christians' did believe in 'The Priority of Ethnicity'. According to one of their advocates: 'As inner man the Christian acts within the Kingdom of God wholly intent upon fulfilling the morality of the divine goodness, but as secular man he follows in his office the autonomy of the world in pursuing a morality of force and of power'. The product of McGavran's principle in this context is not even a half Christian humanity!

McGavran's attempt to accommodate faith to the structures of the world and its laws, will invariably lead to a pragmatic synthesis; and is [p. 262](#) therefore a recipe for disaster. As such, it becomes a perversion of true faith.

However, in future missionary strategies, it is the American religion that should be taken as a model for understanding McGavran's Church Growth theory. In an American religious map, faith has to operate in a world defined by the American Way of Life. The

Fundamentalist-Evangelical, Pentecostal-Charismatic and other groups have operated successfully during the period after the war and have been rewarded with steadily increasing membership. But numerical increase has been matched by a qualitative depreciation of Christian faith. Even in the mid sixties Peter Berger observed that Christianity instead of creating its own values was in the service of secular values. More recent studies have shown that Civil Religion, is the American Way of Life (Will Herberg) is the real religion of the American people. Christianity, with its numerous denominations still has a provincial rôle in locating a person's particular identity in one vast religious map. Denominational boundaries may be crossed, but all must participate in the structure of the whole, the religion of American Way of Life or American Shinto, which stands above Christianity with its own set of ideas, rituals and symbols (Marty, Martin E., *A Nation of Behavers*, 1976, p.180–202). Under these circumstances the believer may continue to listen to sermons and participate in the sacraments on Sundays, but from Monday to Saturday, they become totally irrelevant to what he does.

The American scene shows that numerical growth can indeed be achieved along the lines suggested by McGavran. But it leads to a complete distortion of faith. Christian faith is reduced to a cultural religion, like Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam (as such it is also of an ideological function during national emergencies). We would do well to reject McGavran's De Nobill solution. A true confession of God is possible only by confessing also against a background. Thus it involves a revision of all the existing boundaries in the light of the Gospel of our Lord.

(A Sri Lankan student at the University of Hull). p. 263

Paul's Context and Ours

Wright Doyle

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In a clear and lucid style the author portrays the social, political and religious life in Rome in Paul's day. He surveys the content of Paul's message in this disturbing context and draws some parallels between Paul's context and that of Asian Christians today. Some of our readers may feel that Paul's message was more radical in social transformation than this author suggests. Readers are invited to respond to the practical implication of Paul's Letter to the Romans for their own context. The editors welcome letters to the editor.

(Editors)

As we try to communicate the gospel in Asia, we can be encouraged by Paul's example. In many ways, he faced a situation similar to what Christians in Asian countries encounter.

PAUL A JEWISH CHRISTIAN

Paul was a victim of discrimination and oppression. As a Jew he belonged to a despised race. Noted for their narrow-minded bigotry, Jews elicited a hostile response wherever