

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 9

Volume 9 • Number 1 • January 1985

Evangelical Review of Theology

*Articles and book reviews original and selected from
publications worldwide for an international
readership, interpreting the Christian faith for
contemporary living.*

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Published by
THE PATERNOSTER PRESS

issues it highlighted. Though the conference failed to become the integrating 'switchyard' as it had billed itself, there is **P. 31** reason for hope. Evangelicals are beginning to move in the right direction. Despite frustrating reversals, the 'tracks' are converging—slowly. More encouraging still, they may even be drawing cautiously within hailing distance of the concerns aired at Pasadena and Vancouver. All the while, our ecumenical brethren are becoming increasingly appreciative of Evangelical contributions.

Dr. Cook is the General Director of CELEP, San José, Costa Rica and Editor of *Occasional Essays*. **p. 32**

Wheaton '83 Letter to the Churches

We, the participants in the Wheaton '83 Conference, greet you, our brothers and sisters all over the world, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. More than 300 of us from 60 countries gathered for this Conference about 'the nature and mission of the church', convened by the World Evangelical Fellowship, sponsored by many churches and agencies, and meeting in June 1983 in Wheaton, Illinois, U.S.A. For two weeks, under the general theme of our Lord's Word, 'I will build my church', we have been working together in three simultaneous consultations dealing with:

The Church in its Local Setting;
The Church in New Frontiers for Missions;
The Church in Response to Human Need.

We were very diverse in our background, coming from rich and poor nations, speaking different languages, having different cultures and histories and with great disparity in incomes and lifestyles. We came from churches representing a variety of forms, structures and practices. All were concerned about the urgent need for a biblical and incarnated theology of the church and to proclaim the Gospel to every people. We invite you to join us in our effort to study the nature and mission of the church which our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is building.

I THE CHURCH IN ITS LOCAL SETTING

The Church as the Kingdom Community

Some may wonder why it is necessary to have an international conference to discuss the nature and mission of the church. Are not the historic creeds and confessions enough?

Certainly the creeds and confessions affirm with great precision the unity, the holiness, the universality and the apostolic nature of the church. Yet it is also true that we live in two dimensions at the same time. We possess a joyous oneness in Christ which transcends all restrictions known to mankind but we also live in the painful reality of a visible church regrettably divided by both doctrine and practice.

And so, we have sought to discover afresh what it means in our time to affirm that the church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. We have understood and now reaffirm that the church is the community of Christ's saving rule, made up of those who bear and confess

the name of Christ. His Kingdom community manifests itself locally and visibly in a variety of assemblies, large and small, gathered by God's Word and marked by Christ's ordinances. These local assemblies minister to God [p. 33](#) in worship, to their members in nurture, and to the world in witness and service.

The Life and Work of Local Churches

We acknowledge that these local assemblies are shaped by Christ Himself receiving both life and form from His Spirit. And we know the Spirit provides everything needed for their life and work, and that the Spirit transforms their members into the likeness of Christ. We know that the Lord who so richly endowed the church charges us to holiness and godliness, as together we eagerly await the consummation of all things in and through our Lord Jesus Christ from whom and for whom all things exist ([2 Peter 3:11, 13](#); [Colossians 1:16, 17](#)).

We have also searched the Scriptures and shared our insights in order to clarify our claim to be apostolic. We praise God that Christ's church is built upon the teachings of the apostles and prophets who received the Word of God and ministered it to us ([Ephesians 2:20](#)). Moreover, our churches are apostolic not only because they rest on that foundation but also on account of their mission. We therefore unequivocally affirm that the command of Christ to His apostles in [Matthew 28:19, 20](#) is totally binding upon us all.

The Witness of Suffering and Free Churches

We recognize with sober concern that some churches are being called by Christ to fulfil their apostolic mission amidst forces fiercely hostile towards both them and their Lord. We all thank God for their faithful witness, and pledge ourselves to support them and pray for them.

Dear brothers and sisters, we have been humbled to reflect that if some of our number can accept suffering for Christ and His Kingdom those of us who enjoy the freedom to serve Christ openly should break out of our complacency and redeem the time. Ought we not to shun the temptation to compromise and to be conformed to this world? Ought we not to repent of our self-indulgence and indifference? We cannot afford to forget that we should be a prophetic voice in the world today, preparing the way for the Lord's return!

Leadership Training in the Churches

We have also considered leadership in the church. We praise the Lord Jesus that He still raises up those whom He endows and equips to build up His church ([Ephesians 4:11-16](#)). We must be alert to identify the gifts of the Spirit in men and women, and encourage them to carry the torch of testimony in the power of the Holy Spirit. We may be able in part to do this by formal training but we must recognize that informal [p. 34](#) learning through active service and discipling is always necessary for the formation of leaders.

Co-operation Between Churches and Agencies

We have given serious attention to the relationships between local churches and denominations on the one hand and para-church agencies on the other. We are grateful for what many of these agencies are doing in the areas of evangelistic outreach and specialized ministries. We view them as servant agencies supplementing the mission of the church to the world. Let us bear in mind that the para-church agencies have a responsibility to relate their ministries to the full fellowship of the church.

We are sad to learn, however, that there are sometimes serious tensions between churches and para-church agencies. We humbly appeal to everybody involved to be

responsible stewards of what God has entrusted to us. Let us therefore be mindful of each other and together listen to our Lord. Only in this way will our time, resources and personnel be used responsibly and will we strengthen each other in our common ministry. And only so can the friction caused by paternalism, insensitivity, and abuse of power be overcome.

We are very conscious of the fact that this entire matter still needs further reflection and we invite you to join us in this. Our overall purpose should be to fulfil our task of reaching the unreached, responding to human needs and building up the church to the glory of God.

II THE CHURCH IN NEW FRONTIERS FOR MISSIONS

A local church is the body of Jesus Christ in its historical and geographical setting, the gathering of men, women, and children, reconciled by Jesus Christ. To this church, in spite of its weaknesses, the Lord has given the task of continuing His own mission, of being the agent of mission in His world.

The Challenge of Unreached Communities

We are thankful for missionary outreach in past centuries which has planted the church in all the world. But we are deeply conscious of the lostness of more than three thousand million people who have not yet had the opportunity to respond to the gospel or have rejected it. In thousands of social and ethnic groups, there are still no churches. Accordingly in considering the mission of the church, we have been challenged to find ways to cross new frontiers to reach urban communities **p. 35** and those imprisoned by resistant religious and ideological systems. We are equally concerned for people whose life-styles and values are negatively affected by manipulative mass-media.

The Church as a Missionary Community

As local and national churches God is calling us today to respond to the challenge of these frontiers across the world. Every church is called to fulfil the mission in its own place and in all the world ([Acts 1:8](#)). Indeed the church in its local and regional expression is both a gathering and a sending community. We invite you to explore with us these two aspects of the church.

New Structures for Mission Agencies

We are thankful for the increasing interest in missionary outreach in our century. We recognize that a significant part of the mission work is done through new sending agencies. A century ago mission was still mostly a one-way operation. Today it is different. Churches in all parts of the world are crossing frontiers at home and abroad creating their own sending agencies. Others are taking an active part in existing international Christian organizations.

We have heard about new examples of training missionaries in different countries and we are glad to see that some new patterns are emerging. There is a growing recognition that to be adequate, orientation should be provided at the location of ministry.

Sharing Resources for Mission Worldwide

God is calling us to mission in every place. He provides the enabling resources to fulfil this calling. People called of God and filled with wisdom and the Holy Spirit are the churches' primary resources. Christ continues to call us to prayer that the Lord will send forth

committed and faithful workers into His harvest field. God's means also include material resources of finance and new and traditional forms of communication media. We ask both traditional and emerging missions to share these resources with each other so that the whole body of Christ may be built up in unity and in faith.

III THE CHURCH IN RESPONSE TO HUMAN NEED

Compassion for the Lost and Exploited

As we reflected on the nearly three thousand million people who still have to hear of Christ and His gospel, we were struck by the awesome awareness that most of them are poor and that many are getting even **p. 36** poorer. Millions of these people live in situations where they suffer exploitations and oppression and where their dignity as people created in God's image is being assaulted in many ways. We must be deeply moved by their plight. Our Lord Jesus Christ redeems us from eternal lostness and establishes his lordship over all of our lives. Let us not limit our gospel, then, to a message about life after death. Our mission is far more comprehensive. God calls us to proclaim Christ to the lost and to reach out to people in the name of Christ with compassion and concern for justice and equity ([Rom. 10:14, 15](#); [Ps. 82:2-4](#); [Mic. 6:8](#)).

The Transforming Presence of the Kingdom

We have reminded each other and we remind you that in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, the Kingdom of God has come to us ([Lk. 11:20](#)). We confess that the Kingdom is still to come in its fulness at our Lord's return and we live in joyful expectation of that day. Yet we also affirm that He has already given us His Spirit as first-fruit of the glorious future and as guarantee of what is still to come ([Rom. 8:23](#), [Eph. 1:14](#)).

The reality of the presence of the Kingdom gives us the courage to begin here and now to erect signs of the coming Kingdom by working prayerfully and consistently for more justice and peace and towards the transformation of individuals and societies. Since one day God will wipe away all tears, it grieves us to see people suffer *now*; since one day there will be perfect peace, we are called to be peace makers *now*; since one day we will enjoy full salvation, we have to oppose deprivation and injustice *now*. We humbly yet urgently call upon you to stand with us in this ministry of practising love, seeking to restore the dignity of human beings created in the image of God.

A Two-Fold Accountability

We gratefully acknowledge the fact that many churches and Christian agencies are involved in the work of relief, of justice, and of transforming communities. We rejoice in what is being done through the far-flung and diverse activities of such Christian groups and individuals. Still, as children of the same Father, we recognize that we are to be accountable not only to those who support our ministries but also to those to whom we minister including the local churches. We are thus challenged to become more sensitive to each others' needs as we together seek to glorify God. We should recognize that we are never only givers; we are also receivers, and we rejoice in the many and varied gifts we have been privileged to receive from one another. **p. 37**

The Stewardship of God's Resources

We have come to the awareness that we may joyfully affirm our various cultures as God's gifts to us. It has, however, become clear to us that these very cultures are infected with

evil and may indeed lure us into conforming to the world. We have been challenged to let God's Spirit purify our cultures, so that they may be ennobled and transformed.

We have become deeply aware of the fact that we have nothing we can really call our own. Everything belongs to our Lord, and we are to be His faithful stewards. We are therefore challenged to care for His creation. This means, among other things, that many of us should live more simply in order that others, including unborn generations, may simply live. We humbly confess that we have often acted as though the earth's resources and what we call our possessions are for us to use and squander at will, not realizing our dependence upon and responsibility to others.

An Invitation to Partnership

Finally, brothers and sisters, we confess our utter dependence upon God. He sends *us* into the world, but the mission remains *His*. It is He who enlists us—the Kingdom community—in His agenda for the world. To this end, He has given us His Spirit, to enlighten us and be our Counsellor, to impart His many gifts to us, and to equip us for our ministry. We move forward—trembling yet confidently—and we invite you to move with us, as we prepare for that day when Christ will return and every knee will bow before Him and every tongue confess Him as Lord of all.

PRAISE HIS NAME! [p. 38](#)

Yoga as a Method of Liberation

Moti Lal Pandit

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The modern guru movements that have captivated thousands if not millions of Westerners have one thing in common—the practice of yoga. The increasing flood of propagandist literature on yoga generally misleads people about its ultimate purpose. Yoga is not simply meditation; its goal is to liberate man from his own humanity and from the created world. The ideology of yoga determines the meditational techniques used by the gurus.

The importance of this article is that it does not deal just with the praxis of yoga but gives a rigorous scientific analysis of its philosophic roots. It is the most penetrating analysis this editor has ever read. It is pure science and herein lies its importance for Christian apologetics. Too often Christian apologetics deal primarily with the phenomena and are weak on the theoretical base. This article is pre-theology; it has no reference to Christian doctrine at all. But reflection on it in the light of biblical dogmatics will be of immense value for those who are serious in seeking to understand the dynamics of Hindu spirituality and who want to expound a radical alternative that leads genuine seekers after inner peace to salvation in Jesus Christ—the only true liberator.

(Editor)

INTRODUCTION