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and necessary doctrine is not, however, unique to Guatemala. Not a few left-leaning *evangélicos* in Nicaragua saw the Sandinista victory as the anteroom to God's kingdom. There, as more recently in Guatemala, conscientious biblical political education as part of ongoing discipleship could have avoided grievous errors.

CONCLUSION

In review, we see that North American missions have made a significant impact on Central America. In a positive sense, Protestant missions have served God's purposes by distributing His Word; they have won millions to Christ; they and their churches have improved the physical and spiritual lives of many by freeing them from vices, by establishing training schools and establishing institutions of higher learning. Nevertheless, the theology accompanying much of this work has been partial, superficial and often politically tendentious. In a negative sense, we see a fragmented Protestantism that has not been able to unite, despite several long-term and notable attempts. Most recently the ill feelings between the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) and the Latin American Evangelical Confederation (CONELA) illustrate anew the divisions. The competition began to emerge only after CLAI appeared to gain a foothold among many churches. The divisions and fragility of unions have permitted Protestantism to fall into political traps. In politically charged Central America such partisanship threatens to separate Christians ever further.

By no means is all grim, however. Protestantism grew in Central America by the fruit of God's Word—*sola scriptura*. Another foundational doctrine of the Reformation—the priesthood of all believers—also functions biblically by providing leaders who live the [p. 243](#) grace and faith of [Ephesians 2:11–12](#). Even more significantly, we must note in concluding that in the camp of the once-enemy Roman Catholics, those two doctrines are helping to bring about grassroots and some institutional changes that may portend a unity of Christian sisters and brothers once more.

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Key Issues in Missiology Today

John Gration

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It needs to be recognized at the outset that any agenda of missiological issues will to a degree be inevitably determined by one's perspectives. These include one's theological perspective. The agenda of the conciliar movement differs considerably from that movement which is commonly designated evangelical. The agenda likewise varies between those who are Reformed and those who come out of a non-Reformed tradition.

One's ethnic and economic perspectives are also factors. Even as we read the Bible with cultural glasses, so also we see the issue of missions through our cultural glasses. A call for a theology of the poor or a theology of justice is more likely to come out of the Third World or the inner city than out of a North America suburban context. For example, one does not find many Latin evangelicals excited about the issues raised in Arthur Johnston's *The Battle for World Evangelism*.¹

Realizing then, the importance of perspective in general and of the relationship between theory and practice in particular, I would like to suggest a number of issues that are critical from an evangelical point of view.

CHURCH AND KINGDOM

The relationship between the church and the kingdom and the significance of this relationship to missions should receive increasing attention on the part of evangelicals.² The answers to a number of questions depend upon the nature of this relationship. First, what is the primary aim of evangelism? Is it to preach Christ and the kingdom, or to plant churches? If this is not the best way to put it, we might ask whether the task of missions is based on the nature of the church or the nature of the kingdom. Is God's work in this age primarily 'calling out a people for his name' ([Acts 15:14](#)), or extending and building Christ's kingdom on earth ([Acts 15:16](#))? (This entire [Acts 15](#) passage merits careful exegetical study.) **P. 245**

To put the question still another way, is the growth (expansion and extension) of churches the ultimate goal of mission, or is the church simply a result of the gospel proclamation, the 'first fruits' of the manifestation and reality of the kingdom?³ It is interesting that Peter Wagner devotes a chapter to the kingdom in his book *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel*—a book that constitutes one answer to the various critics of the church growth school of thought.⁴

MISSION AND EVANGELISM

A number of issues grow out of the distinction between mission and evangelism. They could reflect problems of semantics, or they could reflect a deep divergence. What does the 'mission of the church' embrace? What does it exclude? Is it '... everything the church is sent into the world to do?'⁵ Or is Donald McGavran correct when he affirms that 'A chief and irreplaceable purpose of mission is church growth?'⁶

What is the meaning of 'evangelism'? How weighted and freighted should this word become? Does it signify the proclamation of the good news of God's redemptive purposes in Jesus Christ, or does 'evangelism' inherently commit us to a 'wholistic evangelism' that embraces social service and social action?

¹ Arthur Johnston, *The Battle for World Evangelism*. Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1978.

² As an example see Peter Kuzmicû, 'The Church and the Kingdom of God.' Unpublished paper of the International Conference on the Nature and Mission of the Church, June 20–July 1, 1983, Wheaton, Ill.

³ Orlando Costas. *Christ Outside the Gate*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1982, p.43.

⁴ C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel*, New York: Harper and Row, 1981.

⁵ John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1975, p.30.

⁶ Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1970, p.32.

Note that the question is not, 'Do we engage in social service and action?' but 'Is this an inherent part of evangelism?'⁷ We are not concerned here with either the concomitants or the results of evangelism but with what evangelism is in itself. Which views of evangelism are too wide? Which views are too narrow? Our answer will determine our response to Costas' assertion that,

The church is faithful to her witnessing vocation when she becomes a catalyst for God's liberating action in the world of poverty, exploitation, hunger, guilt and despair by standing in solidarity with people, by showing p. 246 them with concrete actions that God cares and wills to save them and by helping them to understand material and moral roots of their situation.⁸

THE GOSPEL AND SALVATION

This brings us to a consideration of the meaning of 'gospel.' Padilla and others accuse evangelicals of proclaiming a truncated, emasculated gospel, an easy believism, and 'cheap grace.'⁹ To what extent is this accusation justified?

The nature of the gospel focuses on two questions: What does the gospel offer? and, What does the gospel demand? Is it proper and biblical to speak of the 'demands' of the gospel, if the only 'demand' of the gospel is 'to truly repent, which means to accept the good news and submit to God's love?'¹⁰ What is the balance between 'cheap grace' and "exorbitant grace"? And who sets the agenda of repentance—the evangelizer or the receptor of the gospel?

We have referred to God's redemptive purposes. These I equate with salvation. This brings us to another key issue, namely, what is the meaning of 'salvation'? Without going into all aspects of the question from either an historical or a biblical perspective, reference might be made to Section II of the 1973 Bangkok 'Salvation Today' Conference. This section dealt with salvation and social justice and viewed salvation as primarily a social-historical process. It spoke of Christ 'working out his plan of salvation in history' and concluded that 'the present-day struggle for liberation and justice must have some salvific significance.'¹¹ The meaning of 'salvation' to many gathered at Bangkok becomes clear in the light of the following statement:

The salvation which Christ brought, and in which we participate, offers a comprehensive wholeness in this divided life. We understand salvation as newness of life—the unfolding of true humanity in the fulness of God (Col. 2:9). It is the salvation of the soul and the body, of the individual and p. 247 society, mankind and the 'groaning creation' (Rom. 8:19). As evil works both in personal life and in exploitative social structures which humiliate humankind, so God's justice manifests itself both in the justification of the sinner and in social and political justice. As guilt is both individual and corporate so God's liberating

⁷ For a positive response to this question see Michael Green, 'Evangelism in the Early Church.' *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*. Edited by J. D. Douglas, Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975, pp.175–176.

⁸ Orlando Costas. 'Evangelism and the Gospel of Salvation,' *International Review of Missions*. LXII 249, January, 1974, p.33.

⁹ Rene Padilla, 'Evangelism and the World.' *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, pp.126–131.

¹⁰ Norman Kraus, 'Today's Gospel of Salvation.' *Missions, Evangelism, and Church Growth*, edited by C. Norman Kraus. Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1980, p.77. See also Orlando Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1982, pp.79–80, 92–93.

¹¹ Kraus, p.67.

power changes both persons and structures. We have to overcome the dichotomies in our thinking between soul and body, person and society, humankind and creation. Therefore we see the struggles for economic justice, political freedom and cultural renewal as elements in the total liberation of the world through the mission of God.¹²

So what does 'salvation' mean to us as evangelicals? Is it simply the receiving of Christ as one's Lord and Savior resulting in individual deliverance from the varied results of sin? Or is it the advent of God's kingly rule to earth? In this connection it may be asked if there is a biblical and non-biblical social gospel. Periodically I hear fundamentalists castigated for narrowly rejecting Rauschenbusch's 'social gospel.' But was the problem with this gospel only one of emphasis? Or was there also a deep theological flaw? Is it theologically correct to speak of the kingdom of God as 'humanity organized according to the will of God' á la Rauschenbusch?¹³ Is it biblical to speak of 'Christianizing the social order' and 'the salvation of the superpersonal forces,' that is, 'the economic, social, and political institutions of society'?¹⁴

Furthermore, how does this view of the kingdom of God as the ultimate ethical ideal for society differ from Costas' statement that '... history, in spite of all its contradictions and failures, is being moved by the Holy Spirit toward the final consummation of God's kingdom'?¹⁵ Watson suggests that in his stimulating volume, *Christ Outside the Gate*, Costas affirms that 'the *missio Dei* confronts us with a choice: whether to join God in the task of bringing in the New Age or to seek to create 'ecclesial compounds' which shelter and ultimately alienate from the world.'¹⁶ Even if we grant a certain validity to such statements, how is evangelicalism preserved from the practical p. 248 consequences of such an approach; namely, losing the priority of verbal evangelism?

THE LOSTNESS OF HUMANITY

Another important issue has to do with the fate of those who have never heard the gospel. Does evangelicalism have an incipient, assumed, and silent version of Rahner's 'anonymous Christian,' or at least a modified universalism?¹⁷ A survey done at Urbana a few years ago would seem to bear out this conclusion.¹⁸ Does our relative silence on the subjects of the lostness of all men, hell, and an eternal judgment say something about what we really believe on these subjects? Do we believe that God has a back-up plan, a plan B, if the church fails in its missionary obligation?

Does the bugaboo of dichotomizing, the one great, unforgivable missiological sin of the '80's, keep us from distinguishing between the relative importance of the body and

¹² 'Section II: Salvation and Social Justice.' Bangkok Assembly 1973: Minutes and Report of the Assembly of the Commission on World Missions and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches. New York: World Council of Churches, 1973.

¹³ Kraus describes some of these issues. The questions are mine. See Kraus, 'Introduction: Evangelism, Missions, and Church Growth.' *Missions, Evangelism, and Church Growth*, p.21.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, p.40.

¹⁶ David Watson, 'Review of Christ Outside the Gate.' *TSF Bulletin*, VI 4, March-April, 1983, p.18.

¹⁷ See Alfred Krass, *Evangelizing Neopagan North America* Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1982, pp.64, 65.

¹⁸ Paul F. Barkman, Edward R. Dayton, and Edward L. Gruman. *Christian Collegians and Foreign Missions*. Monrovia, Calif.: MARC, 1969, pp.28, 184, 232.

material things and the eternal value of the soul? Our Lord may never have dichotomized, but he certainly made some strong distinctions ([Matt. 6:33](#); [Luke 12:13–21](#)).

THE CHURCH AND PARACHURCH GROUPS

Other issues relate to the church vs. the parachurch debate. Helpful in understanding this debate are Howard Snyder's two books, *The Problem of Wineskins* and *Community of the King*.¹⁹ However, we might ask when does the 'church'—in certain aspects of its organization and manifestation—become 'parachurch'? If a Conservative Baptist church is a church, is the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society parachurch? Just what do we mean by 'parachurch'? Furthermore, is the contrast between the organic and charismatic, and institutional and organizational, views of the church a valid contrast? Is not organizational structure an essential part of the nature of the visible church? I tend to think it is. **P. 249**

GOSPEL AND CULTURE

Certainly one of the key issues on the current missiological agenda is the whole question of the gospel and culture. We must continue to live with the tension between them, but will the pressure to contextualize permit culture to alter the gospel? Will the context take precedence over the text of Scripture? Will over-contextualizing lead to syncretism? These are important questions.

Of course, the tension between Christianity and culture can also result in an 'unconscious contextualizing' and syncretism in the North American church where Christianity all too often becomes equated with American values.²⁰ It is with this in mind that Padilla points to the 'culture Christianity' of North America.²¹

Again, we might inquire as to the definitions of indigenization and contextualization. In what ways does contextualization go beyond the three-self definition?²² For example, are Latinos in Chicago who effect basic General Baptist or Reformed ecclesiastical models of church government contextualizing? Have we changed the actors but kept the same script? Have we touched the essence, or applied cosmetics? Are we witnessing a 'missiological Halloween ball' where people are masquerading as something they really are not?

While seeking to spell out the role of the Bible in all of these questions we are driven back to basic hermeneutical questions. What is normative for all time? And what is related only to biblical times and culture? These are all-important issues. Let us remember that inerrancy becomes irrelevant if we lose biblical truth through the back door of cultural and ethical relativity.

POVERTY AND JUSTICE

¹⁹ Howard Snyder, *The Problem of Wineskins: Church Structure in a Technological Age, Community of the King*. Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 1977.

²⁰ Philip Yancey, 'Learning from Gandhi,' *Christianity Today*, Vol. 27, No. 7, April, 1983, pp.19, 20. See also Alfred Krass, *Evangelizing Neopagan North America*, pp.118–151.

²¹ Rene Padilla. 'Evangelism and the World,' *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, pp.125–127.

²² Charles Taber, 'Contextualization: Indigenization and/or Transformation,' *The Gospel and Islam*. Edited by Don McCurry, Monrovia, Calif. MARC, 1979.

We cannot sidestep the issue of poverty. Who are the biblical 'poor' whom God is on the side of? In what sense is he on their side? What does world poverty say to American evangelical affluence? What does it say to the lifestyle of American missionaries? What does it say to our credibility? Are we prepared emotionally, psychologically, and **P. 250** spiritually to minister in a context of poverty? As we face the call for a growing partnership with Third World missions, we must ask if this is realistically possible, given our present standards of affluence in the West.

Closely allied with the challenge of poverty is that of justice. We are told that we must find where God is active in bringing about justice in society and join him in that endeavor. This approach raises a host of problems for evangelicals. But where does the evangelical missionary stand in the struggle for justice? Is justice a World Council of Churches concern only? How does this whole question affect our loyalty to governments, to the status quo? And above all, our loyalty to the gospel of which justice is an integral part? Harvie Conn's new book, *Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace*, addresses these issues.²³

MISSIONARY TRAINING

Finally, we must ask ourselves whether or not our missionary candidates are being adequately trained for mission in the years ahead. We talk about wholistic mission and wholistic evangelism. What about wholistic education for missions that concerns itself as much with spiritual 'formation' as with intellectual and cognitive development? Will our M.A. and M.Div. programs prepare students for missionary service in the '80s and '90s? Are they going to be viewed as too costly and time-consuming when one can become an instant missionary by going out short-term and thus bypass a lot of the requirements generally thought to be necessary for the career missionary?

These are some of the questions I face as I peer through a knothole-like window from the second floor of the Graham Center and into a confused and needy world. Obviously, they are not mine alone. They appear on the agendas of many a missiological forum. But for my part, I earnestly pray that the future will afford many more opportunities to discuss and strategize concerning them, with my fellow evangelical missiologists.

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Karl Marx's Negation of Christianity: A Theological Response

Klaus Bockmuehl

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²³ Harvie Conn, *Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981.