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family of varied local churches in six continents, from the northern Atlantic centre to a polycentric worldwide basis. And the tensions between the historical phenomenon of One Church and yet many churches—the RCC and other churches in their common calling to search together, ‘without prejudicing the future inspirations of the Holy Spirit’ (UR 24), for that full koinonia when all the churches will be able freely to recognize in each other the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church *in its fullness*. **['One']**

- b). between the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of love in adoring God in the moral community of ‘The Way’ ([Acts 9:2, 22](#)) of right living and conduct ‘in Christ’, and the embrace of a good yet sinful world, with choices, often ambiguous, of compassionate love of neighbour. **['Holy']**
- c). between the gospel message, ever old without being imprisoned by the past, to be proclaimed among all *gentes*, and, ever new without being ‘trendy’; its inculturations or integration of all that is authentically human. **['Catholic']**
- d). between the one mission of Ministry of teaching, worship and service inspired by the evangelical vision and teaching of the original apostles (Tradition), and the many traditions and ministries, always to be purified and renewed, in order that Ministry is faithfully effected. **['Apostolic']**

Furthermore, mission means sending. Surely as witnesses to ‘the Faithful and True Witness’ ([Rev. 3:14](#)), we Catholics and Evangelicals, who have been baptized into the one Body and are of the same healing, reconciling Spirit, have been sent neither to be enemies nor to be strangers to one another, but we are sent to be brothers and sisters in Christ on behalf of all peoples.

I am convinced that the ‘working paradigm’ in the present witness of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is: **The unceasing search, in season and out of season, for mission in unity and unity in mission: the obligation to draw all Christians together, through the personal, communal and institutional renewal of our churches, into the One Church of Christ always in reformation; and the obligation of the whole church to proclaim by word and deed, the whole gospel of salvation to the whole world, as the servant both to that gospel and to that world.**

I bluntly ask the WEF: if historically so many evangelicals displayed a willingness to follow and witness Christ even into separation because of a commitment to *the truth of mission*, are Evangelicals now willing to be led into *the truth of unity* for the sake of the same mission? How essential is ecumenism, abstracted from its present institutional forms, to the continued renewal of a *true missionary church*?

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Missionary Dynamism in Search of Missiological Discernment

An Evangelical perspective on Mission

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Keywords: Mission, Lausanne, Ecumenical, Holy Spirit, Christology, Evangelical, Church

If you ask an Evangelical missionary for a short simple statement about the aim of Christian mission the answer will probably be 'the proclamation of the gospel and the call of persons to a living faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord'. A historical review points to the origins of the Evangelical missionary effort in movements of spiritual renewal within Protestantism which emphasized personal faith and commitment. The sources for this concept of mission can be traced back to basic theological tenets of the 16th century Reformation, but they were accentuated by the influence of Pietism and the Awakenings in the development of the Protestant missionary movement. Historian Latourette says, 'Protestantism, particularly in the types which were most active in the spread of the faith, tended to stress the individual, the conversion of the individual, and the right and duty of each Christian to think for himself'.¹ Evangelicals can have a clear commitment to mission and a widespread and enthusiastic involvement in the Christian missionary enterprise without having a well defined ecclesiology.

In this paper about the Evangelical concept of mission my intention is to bring missiological questions to our dialogue. I am aware that my selection and treatment of those questions will be coloured by my experience as a Latin American Evangelical, but I am also relatively well acquainted with evangelical persons and movements in other parts of the world. Some of these questions are now part of ongoing conversations and debates within both camps and also between them. The questions that provoke such conversations and debates are posed by missiologists or by theologians who try to interpret the missionary situation in the world on the eve of a new century. Several of those Evangelical and Roman Catholic missiologists and theologians have demonstrated, in their experience and in their writing, an openness to dialogue and to mutual recognition, without denying that almost unsurmountable barriers divide them.² One should not forget that at the beginning of the protestant ecumenical movement of our century the drive towards ecumenism was born from an Evangelical commitment to mission. Dialogue, reflection and theologizing at that point were nurtured by questions and impulses coming from the frontier situations where mission took place. Evangelicals have lamented the loss of that missionary dimension in the World Council of Churches.

BACKGROUND OF MISSIOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS AMONG EVANGELICALS

To have an adequate framework for this dialogue it is necessary to recall the general trends and movements that have developed during the second half of this century. Within it we can place events such as the birth of the World Evangelical Fellowship, the growth of an American Evangelical missionary vitality, the Vatican II Council, and the Lausanne movement. I will dwell for a moment on this because of its impact on the evangelical concept of mission. The Lausanne movement was preceded by three vigorous Evangelical movements following World War II. *First*, the renewal of mass evangelism that reached

¹ 1. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. IV (New York: Harper and Row, 1941), p. 45.

² 2. In the American Society of Missiology as well as in the Overseas Ministries Study Center there is active and valuable cooperation between Conciliar Protestants, Catholics and Evangelicals.

public notice with Billy Graham in Los Angeles, 1949. Some classic elements of revivalistic Protestantism combined with the use of mass media shook the dormant religious routine of people, especially in the big cities, first in North America and then in Europe. *Second*, there was a renewal of serious Evangelical scholarship in biblical studies and theological reflection, following a renewal of evangelical university life in Europe and especially Great Britain. *Third*, strong evangelical churches and movements had emerged around the world, connected to the post-World War II stream of missionary fervour and activity from North America and Europe. Independent 'faith missions' had played an important role in this emergence, representing a new generation that threw itself with great vigour into the task of planting churches, translating Scripture and reaching the restless masses of the Third World through evangelism.

These three movements exemplify the type of Evangelical churches, missionary organizations and denominational renewal groups that find a way of expressing their concern for Christian unity and cooperation in alliances such as WEF or the Lausanne movement. Their variety also explains the tensions that develop within those alliances or umbrella movements which sometimes are unable to contain them. The volunteerism which is the genius of Evangelical life and mission is a key factor in understanding these developments. The 'faith mission' type of missionary activity contributes to the rise of vigorous Evangelical churches in the Third World, which are independent and have no connection with the historic Protestant denominations. Ecclesiology is undefined in these independent churches. Their participation in Evangelical Alliances brings them into contact with Evangelicals inside the mainline churches. The encounter is mutually enriching but it also accounts for a long and difficult process of theological dialogue and definition. There is a dialectical interaction between the vitality that comes from these movements at the grassroots and the direction and stimulation that the alliances themselves provide. In order to understand the Evangelical position, both the promise and the precariousness of this dynamic have to be appreciated and its historical significance has to be evaluated theologically.

The three movements mentioned above converged in the Berlin 1966 World Congress on Evangelism, convened under the leadership of theologian Carl F.H. Henry, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the magazine *Christianity Today*. The vision of the Berlin congress was summarized in its motto, 'One Race, one Gospel, one Task'. One important fact about Berlin is that Evangelicals acknowledged and accepted the validity and significance of the Pentecostal movement. The follow-up congresses after Berlin were platforms of convergence not only for reaffirming Evangelical truth, but also for sober consideration of the spiritual needs of the world. The pragmatic concerns of Evangelicals from North America, and the theological and missiological acumen of European Evangelicals, were matched by the restless sense of mission of Evangelicals in the young churches of the Third World or among the oppressed minorities. The agenda of the ongoing reflection had to make room for the burning questions of those who were witnessing to their faith in Jesus Christ within situations where the ferment of nationalism, social upheaval and ideological conflict were testing the theological depth of both Evangelical and non-evangelical missionaries and churches. Thus Lausanne '74 was preceded by the regional congresses in Singapore (1968), Minneapolis (1969), Bogotá (1969), Ottawa (1970), Amsterdam (1971), and Madrid (1974).

The Lausanne Covenant expresses this unique missiological moment. Precisely at the point in time in which Evangelical Christianity was joyfully aware of its global dimension, it also became painfully aware of its serious shortcomings. Liberated by its missionary thrust from the bonds of sterile fundamentalism, Evangelicalism was able to rediscover the holistic dimensions of the Christian mission that are clearly presented in the Bible.

The Lausanne Covenant restates convictions that are characteristic of Evangelicalism. It starts with a trinitarian confession, a statement about the authority of the Bible and an expression of Christological conviction (LC Par. 1–3). At the same time, the Covenant expresses repentance for what was wrong or missing in the way in which Evangelicals had been accomplishing their missionary task. Key missiological definitions about the nature of evangelism, Christian social responsibility, the church and evangelism, Gospel and culture the need for cooperative ventures and new forms of partnership as well as the urgency of the evangelistic task, show the result of reflection on praxis developed during this century (LC Par. 4–11). Christian hope in the midst of persecution, the conviction about the power of the Holy Spirit and the expectation of the return of Christ complete the statement of faith and purpose of the Lausanne consensus (LC Par. 12–15).

I think it possible to summarize in four points the direction of the process of the Lausanne '74 event, as well as the content of the Covenant it issued. They express a forceful challenge to adopt a new form of missionary practice for world evangelization and a corresponding call for new theological formulation. First, was a commitment to a concept of *holistic* mission that retains the Evangelical emphasis on proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ while also describing the kind of missionary presence it requires, and the call to discipleship and incorporation into the church (LC Par. 4). Inherent in this is self-criticism of the type of dualistic spiritualization that had come to be prevalent in the practice of Evangelical missionaries. Mission relates to every area of human need. For the majority of Evangelicals, however, holistic mission has evangelism as a key and primary component: 'In the church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary' (LC Par. 6).

Second, was the call for *cooperation* in the mission task—between church and para-church, mainline and evangelical, Pentecostal and Reformed—based solely on the missionary passion shared in the Lausanne event, and the basic theological consensus reached in the Covenant itself. The sheer magnitude of the task of world evangelization but also the scandal of sterile division and competition among missionary agencies demanded a new attitude. The sense of urgency of reaching those still unreached even makes room for the type of concern that had been underlying the call for a 'moratorium' (LC Par. 7, 8, 9).

Third, and closely related to the previous point, was the awareness that in the post-imperial era in which we live, the missionary and the theological tasks have a *global* dimension. Christians and missionaries from the European and North American regions, once strongholds of Evangelical faith in the past, had to acknowledge the spiritual decline in those regions and the rise of new thriving churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Thus, neither imperialism nor provincialism could be tolerated.

Fourth, was the commitment to consider seriously the *context* of mission. Issues such as culture, education of leaders, spiritual conflict and persecution were addressed (LC Par. 10–13). The need was recognized for an evaluation of the social, ideological and spiritual struggles that surround and condition the missionary enterprise, in order to design a relevant type of discipleship for our own times.

Because of this preceding process, Lausanne was not the missiological and theological monologue of European or North American Evangelicals, but a brotherly global dialogue of a community that had grown beyond expectations all over the world: a dialogue in search of ways of obedience to the missionary imperatives of Jesus, our Saviour and Lord. Throughout that process the question of relationships with Roman Catholicism was not given much attention though at several points distinctive convictions that separate Evangelicals from Roman Catholics were expressed. There were Roman Catholic observers at the Lausanne Congress but they were not given any prominence or visibility.

After Lausanne, the dialogue and search for cooperation continued in a kind of creative tension within two poles. Some tried to work out the newly perceived vision of holistic mission, while others such as missiologist Donald McGavran and the Church Growth movement continued to emphasize evangelism as the central focus of mission. McGavran wrote: 'In mission today many tasks must be carried on together, yet the multiplicity of good activities must contribute to and not crowd out maximum reconciliation of men to God in the Church of Jesus Christ.' In the Consultation at Pattaya (1980) it became evident that American Evangelicals of this sector were looking for a more pragmatic methodological approach that would pursue a narrower missionary agenda. There was a strong emphasis on frontier missions and on people who had never heard the gospel. These came to be considered the main target of missionary efforts and global plans. The concept of 'unreached peoples' was developed, as well as the idea of a '10/40 window', which would be the area of the planet where most such unreached masses are located. The managerial approach characteristic of this missiology insisted on strategic steps based on information banks and management by objectives.

For the celebration of fifteen years of the Lausanne movement, a 'Lausanne II' conference was organized for late 1989, to be held in Manila, Philippines. The Church Growth sector organized a 'Global Consultation on World Evangelization' (GCOWE) in Singapore, in January of the same year, and adopted a 'Great Commission Manifesto' with the motto 'A Church for Every People and the Gospel for Every Person by the year 2000'. Movements such as 'AD 2000' and 'DAWN' are committed to the implementation of this motto.³ Thomas Wang has summarized its aim:

The purpose is to motivate and network church leaders by channeling vision through consultation, prayer efforts and written materials for the purpose of establishing a mission-minded church planting movement within every unreached people and urban center by AD 2000 so that all peoples have a valid opportunity to experience the love truth and saving power of Jesus Christ.⁴

There is in these movements a reluctance to deal with theological issues. It is considered that those have already been defined at Lausanne and that what is left is a practical task. Here it is important to remember an observation of Alistair McGrath who reminds us that Evangelicalism is actually a movement to recover the Christian orthodoxy expressed in the ecumenical creeds, with an emphasis on the need for a personal appropriation of faith, but with 'a marked reluctance to allow any matters of lesser importance to get in the way of the proclamation and application of the Gospel'.⁵

EVANGELICALS AND CATHOLICS

Many Evangelicals who found the Lausanne Covenant (1974) an adequate expression of their convictions also gave a warm welcome to the Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* from Pope Paul VI. Evangelical mission theologians such as David Bosch and John Stott pointed to some important coincidences and signs of convergence. In fact,

³ 3. Brief descriptions and interpretations of these developments may be found in Arthur F. Glasser, 'The Evangelicals: Unwavering Commitment, Troublesome Divisions', in Gerald H. Anderson et. al., Eds. *Mission in the Nineteen 90s* (Grand Rapids/New Haven: Eerdmans/OMSC, 1991).

⁴ 4. 'What does "reached" mean? An EMQ survey', *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (July 1990), p. 323.

⁵ 5. Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism & the Future of Christianity* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1995), p. 65.

without any intention of triumphalistic self congratulation, one could document the impact of evangelical missionary vitality on Catholic missiologists. This convergence was an important factor in the inauguration of the Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission (ERCDOM) which took place between 1977 and 1984.⁶ The Official Report of this dialogue shows a good number of points of agreement between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics, and is organized around seven basic themes: Revelation and Authority, The Nature of Mission, The Gospel of Salvation, Our Response in the Holy Spirit to the Gospel, the Church and the Gospel, the Gospel and Culture and the Possibilities of Common Witness. The Report also defines with great clarity the points of disagreement and the limitations of dialogue. However it ends with an expression of hope: 'We hope that dialogue on mission between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals will continue, preferably on a regional or local basis, in order that further progress may be made towards a common understanding, sharing and proclaiming of "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" ([Jude 3](#))'.

The Lausanne movement, however, is not a movement where churches or denominations are officially represented. Some of the hard questions that come after evangelism and after the initial missionary step of planting churches, are posed in Evangelical bodies that do have representation of denominations or churches, such as the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF). In 1980 WEF asked an Ecumenical Issues Taskforce to work on a document about a contemporary Evangelical perspective on Roman Catholicism. The report from this task force was completed in 1985, approved in 1986 and published in 1987.⁷ When the Report of ERCDOM was made public, it was evident that it had a more irenic and nuanced tone than the *WEF Perspective*, but careful reading of both documents will also show that there is a good degree of coincidence in relation to the Evangelical convictions even on points wherein there is divergence with the Roman Catholic positions.

In critical areas of the world where dialogue between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics about mission would be most necessary, places such as Latin America and Latin Europe, there has not been much activity, or even willingness by either of the two sides to pursue such dialogue. The *ERCDOM Report* was translated officially into Spanish and published by the General Secretary of the Latin American Theological Fraternity,⁸ but I have not seen any review or reference to it from Catholic sources in Spain or Latin America. Moreover, the language and tone of the documents from the Pope and the Bishops of CELAM in Santo Domingo (1992) were far from the language and tone of the *ERCDOM Report*, and they have in fact gone backwards in comparison with the documents from the Bishops' assemblies held in Medellin (1968) and even Puebla (1979).

Evangelical reactions from Spain and Latin America to the *ERCDOM Report* have been rather scarce. ERCDOM may well have been a dialogue of the more progressive and irenic sectors of both camps, a point that should not be overlooked in a dialogue between Roman Catholics and WEF. These facts point to the absence of a clear organic relationship between theologians, or missiologists on the one hand and church officials and mission executives on the other. This is not difficult to detect in the Evangelical camp. However, the outcome of the Report from the ERCDOM dialogue in Latin America may be pointing

⁶ 6. Basil Meeking and John Stott, *The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission 1977–1984 A Report* (Grand Rapids-Exeter: Eerdmans-Paternoster, 1986), p. 29.

⁷ 7. I will refer to this document as the *WEF Perspective*.

⁸ 8. Dr. C. René Padilla translated and published the document *Diálogo sobre la misión* (Grand Rapids – Buenos Aires: Nueva Creación, 1988).

to a similar situation among Roman Catholics. The question remains of how the findings of this type of dialogue can influence leadership at decision making levels. We might say that dialogue and conversation have cooled off in the nineties. A quick review of Evangelical periodicals such as *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, *The Evangelical Quarterly* and *Evangelical Review of Theology* shows practically no commentary, response or even notice of the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*.

A development taking place within the GCOWE and the AD2000 movements is worth noticing here. Because these missionary organizations emphasize pragmatic evangelism among unreached peoples, the question of their attitude toward Roman Catholics has been debated. Those who champion a strategic concentration on the unreached consider that missionary effort should not go to those who already call themselves Christian, but to those that have never heard the gospel. The practical task of defining who are the unreached requires a decision in relation to non-Evangelical Protestants, Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians. Thus, for instance, David Barrett includes these Christians in his statistical bank and publications, as people who are already evangelized. Ralph Winter holds the same position. This sector of Evangelicals could be expected to be more active in dialogue with Catholics, but that has not been the case.⁹

EVANGELICAL CONVICTIONS AND MISSIONARY DYNAMISM

One does not need to be an Evangelical, or even a Protestant in order to acknowledge the facts of mission history. Latourette, the classic historian of missions, finds that during the 19th and 20th centuries, missionary vitality in the Protestant world bore the marks of the Evangelical ethos.¹⁰ The Protestant missionary movement was born from the ranks of Pietism in central Europe and from the Spiritual Awakenings in the 19th century English speaking world. For Latourette, missionary activity usually stems from spiritual vitality and he submits that the vital minorities of protestants in Europe are mainly from a 'puritan-pietistic-evangelical tradition'. Growth outside Europe corresponds to the same stream, 'This means that world protestantism tends increasingly to have a puritan-pietistic-evangelical stance.'¹¹

In choosing these three terms: 'puritan', 'pietistic' and 'evangelical', Latourette offers a description of the kind of evangelicalism which has kept the initiative in missionary activity in the world. We may look at these terms from a missiological perspective which includes their theological content, as well as their sociological and methodological components. Thus we find in them the ethos of a movement which emphasizes individual conversion and belief followed by moral transformation, which reacts against formal religiosity bred by sacramentalism, and which creates structures that allow rank and file Christians to take part in the missionary activities of the church.

There are Evangelical distinctives that find expression in an Evangelical perspective on mission. However, the task of defining Evangelical distinctives is awesome, due to the variety of positions and emphasis we find in communities such as those linked by the World Evangelical Fellowship. Let us also keep in mind that we cannot place as

⁹ 9. For a critical assessment from a 'loving critic' of this sector see E. Michael Jaffarian, 'World Evangelization by A.D. 2000: Will we make it?' *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, (Jan. 1994), pp. 18-28.

¹⁰ 10. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. 7, 'Advance through storm'. In this final volume of his classical history Latourette provides the (continued) basis for my statement and for his own statement I am quoting below.

¹¹ 11. Latourette, *Desafío a los protestantes*, (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1957), p. 78.

distinctives a set of doctrinal points only, because there is as well an Evangelical ethos that may be defined by the other two terms Latourette associates with Evangelical: puritan and pietistic. Such ethos involves piety, self-image, personal and social ethics, all of which permeate missionary practice.

Evangelical distinctives are well expressed in documents such as the *Lausanne Covenant*, the *ERCDOM Report*, and in the *WEF Perspectives*. From them it is possible to identify a set of convictions which are closely interrelated, providing a theological rationale that undergirds the missionary dynamism of Evangelicals. The seriousness with which they take the biblical imperative for mission relates to their belief in the supreme authority of Scriptures as a source of knowledge of God and a guide to Christian living. This makes Bible translation a key aspect of Evangelical missionary practice. Missionary zeal comes from due regard to the majesty of Jesus Christ both as incarnate God and Lord and as the Saviour of sinful humanity; he is also the centre of their message. Insistence on the need for personal response to the saving work of Jesus Christ accounts for their insistence on conversion as well as involvement in mission. Flexibility of structures for participation of all believers in mission expresses openness to the prompting of the Holy Spirit whose Lordship is also acknowledged. Even without a clearly defined ecclesiology there is conviction about the importance of the Christian community for spiritual nourishment, fellowship and growth. McGrath emphasizes the cohesiveness of Evangelical doctrines and convictions around a Christological core with a missionary thrust, 'Evangelism makes little sense unless there is a real and passionate conviction concerning the uniqueness of Christ, his atoning work on the cross and the need for a personal response of faith from those who hear the Gospel message.'¹²

There is a good degree of correspondence between this list of distinctives and the Statement of Faith of the WEF. The same points appear, in a different order, in the evangelical affirmations stated in the *ERCDOM Report*. Some of them, more explicitly related to mission are found in the section concerning 'The Nature of Mission'. I will refer to some of these Evangelical distinctives as I comment on what has happened since the time in which the above documents were published.

GOD'S MISSION IN ALL OF SCRIPTURE

Because Evangelicals have the highest regard for the Word of God they see the Bible as the norm for faith and practice. It is therefore the norm for our way of thinking and acting in mission. The *WEF Perspective* adopts the statement of the *Lausanne Covenant* about the Bible, and the *ERCDOM Report* shows just how much agreement there is as Evangelicals and Catholics look today at the Scriptures as the Basis for Mission: 'We together affirm the universality of God's purposes ...' The Old and New Testaments are the common point of reference to affirm also that 'mission arises from the self-giving love of the triune God himself and from his eternal purpose'. There is agreement also about the fact that 'the arrival of the messianic Kingdom through Jesus necessitates the announcement of the Good News, the summons to repentance and faith, and the gathering together of the people of God'.

This effort to find the missionary imperative in the great lines of God's revelation in both Testaments is part of an ongoing rediscovery of the missionary theme that runs through the Bible. Here we come to a point Evangelicals must acknowledge: they themselves have a long way to go in terms of deepening their understanding of the biblical basis of mission, in order to establish its validity not on isolated sayings but on the general

¹² 12. McGrath, op. cit., p. 164.

thrust of biblical teaching. As an Evangelical from Latin America, I have found especially significant the fact that Catholic scholars have produced books that have become standard works in the field of the biblical basis of mission. The Spanish translation of Senior-StuhlmueLLer¹³ is now a textbook in many evangelical seminaries across Latin America, simply because there is no Evangelical work of the same scope. South African missiologist David Bosch referred to this reality in an eloquent comment, 'One might even say that by and large, Catholic biblical scholars are currently taking the missionary dimension of Scripture more seriously than their Protestant counterparts.'¹⁴

In the *WEF Perspective* there is also a note of self-criticism about this point: 'We must acknowledge that often we have also set our evangelical traditions above Scripture. In many instances our lip service to biblical authority contradicts the predominant place we give to our denominational and historical baggage.' With this note comes also an important commitment to enter into a global inter-Evangelical dialogue to better understand the biblical teaching on missions 'The time has come for evangelicals around the world to work together in a contextual hermeneutics that will benefit from the rich expressions of evangelical faith that are now taking root in so many nations and cultures.' This call actually points to a principle that has been at work in the development of Evangelical missiology in recent decades, both in the WEF and in the Lausanne movement. It is the principle of a return to Scripture in a search for the deepening of belief and correction of practice. The search for a more holistic concept of mission, for a more comprehensive Christology and for a more dynamic Pneumatology, has been based on serious work in the biblical text, because Evangelicals have no higher authority than Scripture when they come to theological definition.

Some of the more difficult dialogues and debates within the Evangelical movement are related to the corrective role of Scripture in relation to missionary practice. We have an example of this in relation to the missionary strategy known as 'Spiritual Warfare' that has developed in relation to the Church Growth movement and has been promoted in different parts of the world through some Evangelical agencies. At a time in which there is a resurgence of religiosity in many parts of the world, Spiritual Warfare has contributed to a renewed awareness of the spiritual dimension of the missionary task. The Lausanne Covenant had a clear reference to it, 'We believe that we are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil.' (LC Par. 12). However the Spiritual Warfare movement has taken extreme and confusing directions. The Lausanne Committee issued in 1993 a statement warning about this development, and recommending some antidotes:

There is a danger that we revert to think and operate on pagan worldviews or on undiscerning application of Old Testament analogies that were in fact superseded in Jesus Christ. The antidote to this is the rigorous study of the whole of Scripture always interpreting the Old Testament in the light of the New.¹⁵

The return to Scripture in Evangelical missiology, especially to the New Testament patterns, means a continual rediscovery of how mission was carried on by the pre-

¹³ 13. Donald Senior, CP and Carroll StuhlmueLLer, CP *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983).

¹⁴ 14. David Bosch, 'Reflections on Biblical Models of Mission', in James M. Phillips and Robert T. Coote, Eds., *Toward the 21st Century in Christian Mission. Essays in honor of Gerald H. Anderson*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 178.

¹⁵ 15. 'Lausanne Committee Issues Statement on Spiritual Warfare', *World Evangelization Information Service*, Press release 27 August 1992, p. 3.

Constantinian church. Sometimes the understanding of this may not give adequate regard to historical developments. This lack of historical awareness mixed with Evangelical zeal may account for some ways of doing mission that may well be labelled as proselytism. Dialogue has to make room for understanding this, as one of the joint groups working on the issue of proselytism came to acknowledge, affirming that most persons engaged in proselytism 'do so out of a genuine concern for the salvation of those whom they address'.¹⁶

On the other hand for Evangelicals there are fewer conceptual obstacles in the effort to recover the dynamism of the Scriptural patterns. In relation to the question of the laity and their participation in mission, several renewal movements such as Waldensians, Anabaptists, Pietism and Methodism were able to return to the New Testament pattern, creating structures that allowed for ministry of lay people. The same has happened with Pentecostals and Evangelicals in our century, especially in the Third World. It is for me a matter of reflection that though Catholic scholars such as Alexandre Faivre¹⁷ or Eduardo Hoornaert¹⁸ demonstrate that the laity did not appear as a separate class in the church until the middle of the third century, their discovery may come into conflict with the dogmatic developments that George Vandervelde has considered in his paper on the church.

THE CHRISTOLOGICAL CENTRE AND MODEL

McGrath has reminded us recently that the Evangelical stance is radically Christ-centered. He relates this to the high view of Scripture to which Evangelicals are committed: 'Christology and scriptural authority are inextricably linked, in that it is Scripture, and Scripture alone that brings us to the true and saving knowledge of Jesus Christ'.¹⁹ One could describe the development of evangelical missiology after Berlin 1966 as the search for a new Christological paradigm. Traditionally, the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in [Matthew 28:18](#) had been the motto of Evangelical missions, stressing the imperative of Jesus' command to go and evangelize the nations. In Berlin, John Stott started his Bible expositions with the Gospel of John and emphasized that in it we have a model for mission, 'As my Father hath sent me', as well as a missionary imperative, 'even so send I you'. Many came to agree with Stott that 'although these words represent the simplest form of the Great Commission, it is at the same time its most profound form, its most challenging and therefore its most neglected'.²⁰

The Christological paradigm of mission found in the Gospels is incarnational and is marked by a spirit of service. Its roots are in the message of prophets such as Isaiah as well as in the theological elaboration of the Christology of Paul, Peter, John and other apostolic writers. It came to be understood as a corrective to Evangelical triumphalism,

¹⁶ 16. Quoted in Cecil M. Robeck Jr. 'Mission and the Issue of Proselytism', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, (Jan. 1996), p. 6.

¹⁷ 17. Alexandre Faivre, *The Emergence of the Laity in the Early Church*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1990).

¹⁸ 18. Eduardo Hoornaert, *The Memory of the Christian People*, (New York: Orbis Press, 1987).

¹⁹ 19. McGrath, op. cit., p. 65.

²⁰ 20. John R.W. Stott 'The Great Commission' in Carl F.H. Henry and Stanley Mooneyham, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 39.

and consequently taken very seriously by Evangelicals around the world.²¹ In the Evangelical reflection there was a significant shift in attention to the Johannine version of the Great Commission. From this came a new appreciation of the humanity of Jesus Christ and the importance of his incarnational style of mission. This also became the source for evaluation and self-criticism within the Evangelical missionary enterprise. One finds it as a theme in the Lausanne Covenant and as a hermeneutical key in several documents produced later on by the Lausanne movement and the WEF.

René Padilla has expressed well an Evangelical perspective recovered from a fresh reading of the Gospels: 'Jesus Christ is God's missionary par excellence, and he involves his followers in his mission.'²² As we find it in the Gospels, Jesus' mission includes 'fishing for the Kingdom', or, in other words, the call to conversion to Jesus Christ as the way the truth and the life. It is this conversion to Jesus which stands as the basis upon which the Christian community is formed. Mission also includes 'compassion' as a result of immersion among the multitudes. It is neither a sentimental burst of emotion nor an academic option for the poor, but definite and intentional actions of service in order to 'feed the multitude' with bread *for* life, as well as Bread *of* life. Mission includes 'confrontation' between the powers of death and the power of the Suffering Servant, and thus 'suffering' becomes a mark of Jesus' messianic mission and a result of this power struggle and of human injustice. Through creative contextual obedience Jesus' mission becomes a fertile source of inspiration, it contains the seeds of new patterns being explored today through practice and reflection, patterns such as simple lifestyle, holistic mission, the unity of the church for mission, the pattern of God's Kingdom as missiological paradigm and the spiritual conflict involved in mission.

Within the Evangelical missionary stance, the theme of *imitatio Christi* was given a missiological dimension, and one could say that in the case of Latin America there were in this process some convergences with some forms of Liberation theology. For Evangelicals, however, it is clear that biblical Christology also includes an unequivocal reference to the atoning work of Jesus Christ in the cross and the need of every person to respond to it. **There cannot be an imitation of Christ in the biblical sense without a new birth.** This may be a sudden experience or a long process, but awareness of it is very important. In response to liberation theologians who would stress the sociopolitical dimension of the death of Jesus, Padilla, for instance, accepts the truth based on examination of the texts of the Gospels that the death of Jesus was the historical outcome of the kind of life he lived, and that he suffered for the cause of justice and challenges us to do the same. But a warning is necessary, because

Unless the death of Christ is also seen as God's gracious provision of an atonement for sin, the basis for forgiveness is removed and sinners are left without the hope of justification ... salvation is by grace through faith and . . . nothing should detract from the generosity of God's mercy and love as the basis of joyful obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.²³

Here we can appreciate better an important point of divergence between Catholics and Evangelicals that appears in the section on the biblical basis of mission in the *ERCDOM*

²¹ 21. See, for instance, C. René Padilla, Ed., *The New Face of Evangelicalism*, (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1976); Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, Eds., *Sharing Jesus in the Two Thirds World*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

²² 22. C. René Padilla, 'Bible Studies', *Missiology*, 10(3), pp. 319–338.

²³ 23. In Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, Ed., *Sharing Jesus in the Two Thirds World*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 28.

Report. First we find a summary of agreements and disagreements in a crisp sentence: 'While both sides affirm that the pilgrim Church is missionary by its very nature, its missionary activity is differently understood.' It goes on to explain the Vatican II definition of the Church as 'sacrament of salvation ... the sign and promise of redemption to each and every person without exception.' It then states that most Evangelicals have a contrasting position 'The Church is the beginning and anticipation of the new creation, the first born among his creatures. Though all in Adam die, not all are automatically in Christ. So life in Christ has to be received by grace with repentance, through faith. **With yearning Evangelicals plead for a response to the atoning work of Christ in his death and resurrection.** But with sorrow they know that not all who are called are chosen' (emphasis is mine). This conviction is then reflected in missionary activity: 'Evangelization is therefore the call to those outside to come as children of the Father into the fullness of eternal life in Christ by the Spirit, and into the joy of a loving community in the fellowship of the Church.'

This call to conversion is crucial for Evangelical mission. Personal encounter with Jesus Christ changes people radically and there is a component of moral transformation in this concept of conversion. As a historian observed, in the Evangelical revival of John Wesley we could see both the pessimism about human nature, that was characteristic of Calvin's biblical anthropology, and the optimism about divine grace from Evangelical Arminianism that matched it.²⁴ I would say that this balanced but tense vision has been one of the marks of Evangelical missionary and evangelistic efforts. There is power in the blood of Jesus Christ to regenerate persons by the power of the Holy Spirit. This conviction was forcefully restated in 1988 by a joint group of WEF and the Lausanne Committee:

Conversion means turning from sin in repentance to Christ in faith. Through this faith believers are forgiven and justified and adopted into the family of God's children and heirs. In the turning process, they are invited to the crucified and risen Christ by the Holy Spirit who prompts them to die to the sinful desires of their old nature and to be liberated from Satanic bondage and to become new creatures in Him. This is their passage from spiritual death to spiritual life, which Scripture calls regeneration or new birth ([John 3:5](#)).²⁵

Because mission involves frequently a transcultural action it is important to be alert against forms of evangelism and conversion that appear more as the imposition of foreign cultural patterns on the receptors of the Gospel. The Lausanne Covenant had a warning reminding us that 'Missions have all too frequently exported with the Gospel an alien culture, and churches have sometimes been in bondage to culture rather than to Scripture.' (LC Par. 10). The 'Hong Kong Call' offers a more specific reminder that 'there is a radical discontinuity in all conversions, in the sense that the convert "turns from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God" ([Acts 26:18](#)).' However, it also tries to make clear that,

conversion should not 'deculturise' the converts. They should remain members of their cultural community, and wherever possible retain the values that are not contrary to biblical revelation. In no case should the converts be forced to be 'converted' to the culture of the foreign missionary.²⁶

²⁴ 24. E. Gordon Rupp, *Principalities and Powers*, (London: Epworth Press, 1952), pp. 76–93.

²⁵ 25. 'The Hong Kong Call to Conversion', [Evangelical Review of Theology](#), 16(3), 1992, p. 264.

²⁶ 26. Id., p. [267](#).

The radical Christocentrism of Evangelicals accounts also for their stance in relation to other religions. The *WEF Perspective* uses strong language when it criticizes syncretistic practices. At Lausanne II in Manila (1989), Canon Colin Chapman, who had been a missionary among Muslims, acknowledged the fact that Evangelicals had still much to learn in their understanding of how the Bible deals with the issue of religion in general. The question has become more urgent in recent times, in view of the increase of religiosity in the West and the tension between growing pluralism on the one hand and fundamentalisms on the other, in many parts of the world. The way ahead is being opened by the work of theologians from those parts of the world where the encounter with other faiths is part of the daily life of the missionary and the Christian community. Asian and African Evangelicals are contributing to a better understanding of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. There is firmness in their Evangelical conviction, but there is also an awareness of the dangers of Western triumphalism that may have tainted Evangelical positions in the past. Thus, for instance, Vinoth Ramachandra, an Evangelical from Sri Lanka, examines critically the missiological approach of three Asian Catholic theologians: Samartha, Pieris and Pannikar. Then he offers a careful development of orthodox Christology in dialogue with religions and modernity. From his Christology comes a position that avoids arrogance: 'This kind of theological position, which seeks a biblical balance of confidence and humility, defies classification under the customary categories of exclusivist, pluralist and inclusivist where Christian views on the world religions are concerned.'²⁷

During the most recent decade in Latin America there has been much pastoral and theological work (and very little dialogue) in the area of popular religion among both Catholics and Evangelicals. On the one hand there is the effort of the Catholic Church to understand critically the syncretistic forms of Christianity, especially among the indigenous peoples, what is now being called 'the Indian face of God'. On the other hand there is the existence of popular forms of Protestantism that have grown beyond all expectations. Any one familiar with the situation of the continent knows that the question of popular religiosity does not only have a pastoral angle but also a political one which may be the source of most serious disagreements.

A Methodist theologian who has insisted on affirming his Evangelical stance, José Míguez Bonino, has written recently, challenging Latin American Evangelicals to take seriously the issue of other religions. He believes that a trinitarian Christological focus can serve as our guide. 'We must not separate the Jesus Christ of the New Testament from the Word "that was from the beginning" "with God and was God" ', and he invites us to see in human experiences the presence of that Word and that Spirit. This is not 'to "give in" to paganism but rather to confess the One "without (whom) not one thing came into being" ([John 1:3](#)).' His Evangelical warning comes then loud and clear:

It is no less true, however, that Christian theology cannot disengage the Word and the Spirit of God from the 'flesh' of the son of Mary—of his teaching, his message, his life and his death, his resurrection and lordship. It is there where we can find the marks of the authentic Word and Spirit of the God of the covenant. By the yardstick of the presence of God in Jesus one measures all presumed presence of that God in human history.²⁸

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

²⁷ 27. Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Recovery of Mission*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 275.

²⁸ 28. José Míguez Bonino, *Faces of Latin American Protestantism*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 120.

Since Anglican missiologist Roland Allen, former missionary in China, published his book *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* in 1912, the question of a return to New Testament patterns of mission has been pursued in Protestant missiology. Allen started with methodological questions but soon found that he also had to give serious consideration to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in mission. Actually, he was returning to a key point in the practice and theology of both Pietists and Revivalists in the history of missions. It was an important theme for Evangelical champions of missions linked to the Holiness movements, persons such as A.B. Simpson, A.J. Gordon and A.T. Pierson. In the second part of our century, the growth of the Pentecostal movement, which had had a strong missionary thrust from its inception, eventually forced the question from the missiological level, into the realm of historical and biblical studies. The Pentecostal movement in itself became a vast field for research.²⁹

The understanding of the initiative of the Holy Spirit in relation to mission has been enriched by the contributions of several Evangelical scholars. Their works provide a solid foundation for a better understanding of the Evangelical practice of mission.³⁰ In his book *Pentecost and Mission* Harry Boer reminded us that the use of the 'Great Commission' as the imperative motto for Evangelical missionary work, was actually a relatively recent development. The biblical pattern stresses the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church as the source of missionary dynamism—not a new legalism but the free and joyous expression of a renewed experience of God's grace. Here we have a better key to understand what may be the source that inspires the spontaneous missionary thrust in Evangelical missions and churches around the world.

As has already been noted, there are many types of Pentecostals within the Evangelical ranks of both the WEF and the Lausanne movement. However, the acknowledgement of their specific contributions as movements inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit was not easy to accept by other Evangelicals. In this area we have witnessed significant advance in recent years. An important section in the *ERCDOM Report* is given to the work of the Holy Spirit in mission and it is one of the sections in which there are also significant points of agreement among Catholics and Evangelicals. At the same time it is surprising how very little space is given to the work of the Holy Spirit in the *WEF Perspective*. In contrast with this, the Summary Reports of the 1995 consultation of the WEF Theological Commission about 'Faith and Hope for the Future' are permeated by a Trinitarian affirmation and confession of faith and hope in the work of the Holy Spirit.³¹

Evangelical missions in our century, as it has been said, were more inspired by the Wesleyan revivals and the Moravian pioneers of mission than by the sixteenth century magisterial Reformers. The dynamism of missionary Protestantism came from the renewal movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They had grasped truth about the Holy Spirit which now began to make sense. This, however, is not the whole picture. The readiness of men like Wesley or Zinzendorf to abandon old church structures, and their creativity in developing new structures for mission were made possible because they were open to the movement of the Spirit. Such an attitude of openness to the Spirit is what Brazilian missiologist Valdir Steuernagel calls for: 'Mission understood in pneumatological language is one act with two steps. It is first to perceive the blowing of

²⁹ 29. Murray A. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen, Eds., *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991).

³⁰ 30. I think of Harry R. Boer, *Pentecost and Mission*, John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God*, several works of James D.G. Dunn, and more recently Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*.

³¹ 31. [Evangelical Review of Theology](#), 21(1), Jan. 1997, pp. 5–40.

the Spirit and the direction from which it comes. And then it is to run in the same direction to which the Spirit is blowing.’³² Some Evangelicals like myself think that discernment of the blowing of the Spirit requires an open attitude and sensitivity which acknowledge that behind those things that appear as something new and unusual, the strength and vigor of the Spirit may be at work. The act of obedience demands creativity in order to shape new structures that will be adequate instruments for missionary action in a particular historical moment.

In Pauline missionary practice we find this pattern. Paul’s Christology is the development of pastoral, doctrinal and ethical teaching that stems from the fact of Christ. Paul elaborates his Christology as he responds to the needs and the questions of churches which were born from the Spirit and which showed evidence of new life, but which had not yet articulated their belief in a meaningful way. The recipients of these letters were people who had grasped the Lordship of Christ and whose eyes had been opened by the Spirit to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, but they did not have yet a clear Christology. What we have in the world today are churches in which people may repeat weekly the minutiae of a Christological creed but who do not have the new life in Christ that the Spirit begets. On the other hand, we have growing churches where there are the signs of the power of the Spirit at work, but where a basic theological task is necessary, along the lines of what Paul did in his ministry.

Evangelical theology has been an effort to keep both a missiological thrust and faithfulness to revealed truth. Our emphasis has not been in a continuity expressed by an earthly hierarchical institution, but in a continuity made possible by God’s Word revealed to human beings. In all the crossing of missionary frontiers, and in all the efforts at contextualization, Evangelical missiology has stressed a continuity of faithfulness to the Word. In the contemporary situation, we also need to pay heed to what Emil Brunner wrote at the middle point of our century: ‘it is not merely a question of the continuity of the word—the maintenance of the original doctrine—but also of the continuity of a life; that is life flowing from the Holy Ghost. The fellowship of Jesus lives under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; that is the secret of its life, of its communion and of its power.’³³

I place here the question of tension between the charismatic and the institutional in relation to the initiative and authority in mission as they are found in the *ERCDOM Report*, which states that this tension exists among Catholics and Evangelicals. I think that this tension can also be traced back through the whole history of the Church. When it comes to contrasts, the Report points to the importance of hierarchical structures of teaching and pastoral authority in Roman Catholic mission activity, and, on the other hand to the Evangelical emphasis on personal experience: **‘Evangelicals have traditionally emphasized the personal right of every believer to enjoy direct access to God and the Scripture’** (emphasis mine).

We are at this point dealing with missionary activity and methodology but also with a fundamental tenet of the Evangelical position in relation to which other Evangelical convictions become functional, such as the priesthood of all believers. The personal response and direct answer to God engenders a strong sense of responsibility which is reflected in volunteerism. This is the continuous source of activists in missionary work, as well as financial supporters for it. As the *ERCDOM Report* stated: ‘For Evangelicals the agent of the proclamation is the whole community of believers who are equipped for this task by those appointed to the pastoral ministry ([Eph. 4:11-12](#))’.

³² 32. Valdir R. Stuernagel, *Obediência missionária e prática histórica. Em busca de modelos*, (Sao Paulo: ABU Editora, 1993).

³³ 33. Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), p. 47.

conviction allows for more openness to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and for more flexible structures for involvement by all members of the church. At the same time extreme forms of volunteerism and individualism account for those forms of Evangelical missionary action that may well be described as proselytism.

Conversely, as an Evangelical I find it is important to take into account what the Report goes on to state about the important role the bishops play in missionary activity within the Roman Catholic Church. Here it could also be argued that the centrality of the Eucharist in Catholic life and mission is another way through which missionary initiative remains connected with the magisterial function. At least in theory this could guarantee that missionary action does not fall into negative patterns such as proselytism. On the other hand these facts may have a bearing on the difficulties that Catholics find to mobilize their people for mission, not only for the involvement in missionary work, but also in its financial support. I find that some of the ecclesiological questions posed in Latin America by the Base Communities and by theologians such as Leonardo Boff are related to this point.

The points I have examined allow us to establish a correlation between theological convictions and evangelistic dynamism in Evangelical missionary practice. Evangelical divergences in other sections of the *ERCDOM Report* could be also used to illustrate the point I am trying to make. Some of the same convictions are more forcefully and less irenically presented in the *WEF Perspective*.

MISSIONARY VITALITY WITHOUT ECCLESIOLOGICAL DEFINITION

In recent years, Catholic missiologists have been considering more positively, and even expressing admiration for, the missionary vitality of Evangelicals. I must stress the fact that this new attitude comes particularly from **missiologists**, from those who have a grasp of the history of missions but also a concern for the continuity of missionary activity in the coming century. In this regard, one can read, for instance, the writings of Swiss missiologist Walbert Bühlman, who has done much to look at the future of mission with a long term perspective. In his books he describes, with clear but critical admiration, the Evangelical missionary zeal as something worth imitating. He points to several examples from Africa and Asia of the influence Evangelicals have exerted on Catholics in this regard. He even adds comments about Latin America, where Evangelical missions have been strongly critical of Catholicism: 'At the very least acquaintance with their lively activity has shaken us up and helped to convert us from centralism, clericalism and parochial sacramentalism through a laity with Bible in hand.'³⁴

I let American theologian Avery Dulles describe from his United States perspective the missionary passivity of Catholics in relation to the evangelistic dimension of mission. He wrote in 1992:

The majority of Catholics are not strongly inclined toward evangelization. The very term has for them a Protestant ring. The Catholic church is highly institutional, sacramental and hierarchical in its structures. Its activities are primarily directed toward the instruction and pastoral care of its own members, whose needs and demands tax the institution to its limits. Absorbed in the inner problems of the church, and occasionally in issues of peace and justice, contemporary Catholics feel relatively little responsibility for spreading the faith.³⁵

³⁴ 34. Walbert Bühlman, *The Coming of the Third Church*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 1977), p. 218.

³⁵ 35. Avery Dulles, 'John Paul and the New Evangelization', *America*, Feb. 1, 1992, p. 52.

Dulles sees positive signs of a new 'shift in the Catholic tradition' and highlights the emphasis of Pope John Paul II on evangelization. For this theologian there would be mutual benefit from a dialogue between Catholics and Evangelicals, and he outlines some of those benefits. In his description of the strong points of Evangelicals in relation to evangelization, he quotes Kenneth Caycroft:

Evangelicals bring a sense of urgency and fervor to the project. They are converts and children of converts, with all the energetic zeal that that entails. Their emphasis on active personal discipleship and commitment to Sacred Scripture make Evangelicals the yeast in the dough.³⁶

For Dulles, Catholics could help Evangelicals 'to achieve a deeper grounding on tradition, a richer sacramental life, a more lively sense of worldwide community and a keener appreciation of sociopolitical responsibility.'³⁷

One could refer here to the third section of the chapter on 'The Nature of Mission' in the *ERCDOM Report*. It deals with the relationship between evangelization and socio-political activity. It points to the fact that there are controversies around this issue in both camps, and it outlines points of agreement that reflect much of recent Church history, as well as theological reflection in both camps. It is important to add at this point, that much of the reluctance of Evangelicals 'to subscribe to any inseparable unity between evangelization and the kind of socio-political involvement', as the Report describes, stems from fear of losing, or watering down convictions about the urgency of evangelism. Some of us have struggled within the Lausanne movement and the World Evangelical Fellowship for a more biblically based holistic concept of mission among Evangelicals. We have to admit, however, that the fear of some Evangelicals may not be unfounded. In fact, for many mission minded Evangelicals the worst that could happen to their churches would be that they become like the Catholics described by Father Dulles above.

Going back to Latin America where the presence of Evangelical missionaries has frequently been used by Roman Catholics as an example of unfair proselytism, we find now Catholic missiologists commending Evangelical churches for their missionary dynamism. Of course they still use the term 'sect' to refer to them. Thus for instance, observers of popular Evangelical protestantism agree that it has a remarkable ability to mobilize all members of their churches for the missionary task. 'All converts are active members who have to promote the life of the sect and work for the conversion of people who are not converted yet,'³⁸ says Swiss Passionist Roger Aubry. Though he criticizes the fact that sometimes there is more a proselytistic than an evangelistic spirit, he adds in reference to Catholics, 'we must confess that among us, in spite of the serious efforts that are being carried on, there are few lay people actively involved in the pastoral life of their parish or their Church.'³⁹

Franz Damen, a Belgian missionary in Bolivia, observes that among Evangelicals 'the task of evangelization is not assigned to a specialized personnel, because it is the *mission*

³⁶ 36. Id., p. 72.

³⁷ 37. Id.

³⁸ 38. Mons. Roger Aubry, *La misión siguiendo a Jesús por los caminos de América Latina*, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Guadalupe, 1990), p. 111.

³⁹ 39. Id. pp. 111–112.

of each member of the community.⁴⁰ He dismisses the idea that money is a factor, because the most evangelistic groups are those that have no outside connections.⁴¹ He points out that with the smallest missionary force Pentecostals, for instance, have relatively the highest rate of numerical growth. In this article Damen also refutes the idea that converts to Evangelical churches are poor passive victims of a foreign 'avalanche'. He believes Catholic rhetoric is more an expression of dismay because the privileges of religious monopoly are gone for the Catholic Church.

Spanish Jesuit missionary José L. Idígoras, who worked for decades in Perú, analysed carefully the missionary methodology of popular protestantism with its massive outdoor meetings and popular narrative preaching style. He stressed the fact that the evangelistic activity is not limited to the church building, but that groups invaded streets and squares, 'and audaciously they even go house by house and speak *opportune et importune*', adding that 'A Catholic priest, because of his training, would feel out of place in such situations.'⁴² Some of these writers, as well as some official Catholic documents, reserve the name 'church' for denominations active in the ecumenical movement, which usually do not have a strong evangelistic stance. For any church that evangelizes and grows (i.e. Baptists, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Assemblies of God, Nazarenes) the term used is 'sect'.

Evangelical churches have also grown among Hispanics in the United States. The usual 'conspiracy theory' which is applied to explain growth in Latin America, attributing it to obscure CIA designs or Rockefeller plans, cannot be used in North America. Some Catholic reactions have shown the same panic that Damen criticizes in Bolivia. Others have taken a more pastoral approach. Thus for instance, Spanish Jesuit Juan Díaz Vilar, who directs the Evangelization Department of the Northeast Hispanic Catholic Center of New York:

The sects as I see it are not a threat or an invasion, nor a fanaticism that will eventually go away. But they *are* a challenge to our pastoral focus and planning. The sects are showing us where the emptiness is in our pastoral thrust and evangelization efforts. In this sense they can be a help in alerting the Catholic Church to the need for making a move towards fashioning a church that is more personal, caring and communitarian—a Church where everyone regardless of race, ethnic background or language, can feel needed and wanted, and 'at home'.⁴³

It has been fascinating to see during the last decade in Latin America how many methods of evangelism and mission that were characteristic of Evangelicals have been adopted by Roman Catholics. There are now American Catholic missionaries in Chile preaching at noon in the open air, just as Evangelicals do. There are now charismatic priests from Spain in Peru who receive thousands of letters with requests for prayer, and they 'pray them' in TV programs. Testimonies about healings are interspersed with Evangelical 'choruses' in such a way that at some points one is not sure if it is a Catholic or an Evangelical program. A very active Catholic parish in Mexico City developed a handbook on evangelism based on the 'Four Spiritual Laws' of Campus Crusade for Christ.

⁴⁰ 40. Franz Damen, 'Las sectas: ¿avalancha o desafío?', article in the Jesuit magazine, *Cuarto Intermedio*, Cochabamba, Bolivia, May 1989, pp. 60–61.

⁴¹ 41. The usual argument about the financial side of Evangelical missionary action, in the case of Latin America, must be balanced by this observation of Damen. Also, the Catholic Church receives significant infusions of money from missionary sources in Europe and North America, besides the local sources at her disposal, as a result of historical circumstances.

⁴² 42. José Luis Idígoras S.J., *La religión, fenómeno popular*, (Lima: Ediciones Paulinas, 1991), p. 144.

⁴³ 43. Juan Diaz Vilar S.J., 'Hispanics and the Sects in the United States', *The Catholic World*, Nov–Dec 1990, p. 265.

Moving from empirical observation and methodological imitation to theological reflection I propose that there are three categories of questions we must ask for a fruitful dialogue. First, to what degree is this Evangelical missionary dynamism that Catholic missiologists now admire, and this methodological creativity they now are imitating, the direct consequence of an Evangelical theology of mission? Is it driven by the Holy Spirit? If so, what is the Spirit saying to the Roman Catholic Church? Second, in what ways are these facts challenging the Ecclesiology and the Soteriology of the Catholic positions, and conversely what are the weaknesses at this point that Evangelicals have to deal with in their theological expression and in their missionary practice? What form of ecumenism will not quench missionary zeal? Third, how is it possible to avoid a mere methodological competition, and enter in a level of dialogue that involves mutual recognition, long term missionary vision and due regard for the biblical teaching about the Church and its unity?

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Books Reviewed

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Book Reviews

READINGS IN MODERN THEOLOGY: BRITAIN AND AMERICA

edited by Robin Gill

Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995, 399 pp, pb name index

Reviewed by Bradley G. Green, Union University Jackson, Tennessee, USA

It can be a rather confusing time for young theological students. While most of us are trying to get a grip on two thousand years of the theological past, along comes modern theology, a whole new challenge to understand. Thus, while trying to understand and