

# *Evangelical Review of Theology*

**EDITOR: DAVID PARKER**

**Volume 26 • Number 1 • January 2002**

*Articles and book reviews original and  
selected from publications worldwide for  
an international readership for the purpose  
of discerning the obedience of faith*



Published by  
**PATERNOSTER PERIODICALS**



for  
**WORLD EVANGELICAL  
ALLIANCE**  
Theological Commission

# The WEF Theological Commission 1969-1986: A ministry on the frontiers of global evangelical Christianity

Bruce Nicholls

**Keywords:** Evangelical awakening, Lausanne movement, theological education, accreditation, publication, research, dialogue, social responsibility, gospel and culture

The World Evangelical Fellowship<sup>1</sup> is a global movement of evangelicals committed to cross-cultural unity and fellowship, the defence and confirmation of the gospel, and the furtherance of the gospel to the ends of the earth. Early in the nineteenth century the political and industrial upheavals in Europe and North America, the impact of liberal theol-

ogy of the Enlightenment era beginning with Immanuel Kant (which Karl Barth characterised as 'A system founded upon the presuppositions of faith in the omnipotence of human ability') brought evangelicals together at a global level. The renaissance within the Roman Catholic Church and the emergence of a high church Anglo-catholic movement at Oxford added to the sense of urgency. The expansion of western colonialism opened up new opportunities for Christian mission, which called for united action.

---

**Dr Bruce J. Nicholls is the founder of this journal and served as its editor for more than fifteen years. He was educated at the University of Auckland and London Bible College, and holds an MTh degree (Princeton Theological Seminary) and D.D. (Ashland Theological Seminary). After serving as missionary in India for 39 years, he has retired to his home country of New Zealand, where he is active in numerous theological and church ministries, and is editing a major commentary series being prepared by Asian scholars. This paper details his work as the founder of WEF Theological Commission and is based on a presentation made to the World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission Consultation on Ecclesiology, Kuala Lumpur, West Malaysia, 1-4 May 2001.**

---

<sup>1</sup> For the history of the World Evangelical Fellowship, see David M. Howard, *The Dream That Would Not Die: the birth and growth of the World Evangelical Fellowship 1846–1986* (Paternoster, 1986); W. Harold Fuller, *People of the Mandate: the story of the World Evangelical Fellowship* (Paternoster/Baker, 1996)

## **I The Evangelical Awakening**

After a series of small meetings on both sides of the Atlantic, 915 leaders from 52 denominations in 11 countries gathered in London in August 1846 and formed the Evangelical Alliance. Those present met 'not to create Christian union but to confess the unity which the church of Christ possessed as His body'. A statement of faith was adopted. Plans for co-operation in global mission were defined. The first ecumenical movement of modern times was born.

The history of the next hundred years was one of expansion and recession. National Evangelical Alliances were formed across Europe and in North America bringing evangelicals and their churches together. At the same time sharp division over the rights and wrongs of slavery divided Europe from North America. The establishing of the week of prayer, generally in January, became a common feature of the movement. Many national and international conferences were sponsored. However, periods of recession and decline followed, especially early in the twentieth century with the impact of liberal theology and again between the two world wars.

After World War II the evangelical movement world-wide began to experience theological and spiritual renewal. The revitalising of the western global missionary movement reached its peak in the early 1960s. This point also marked the beginning of cross-cultural indigenous missionary movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Today their numbers

are greater than those from the western world. There are now more than 6,000 Korean cross-cultural missionaries and the target of their churches is to cross the 10,000 mark within the next decade.

In the wake of the new concern for world evangelisation, serious reflection began to take place on what it means to be an evangelical. The National Association of Evangelicals in USA was formed in Chicago in 1943. The Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Studies was formed in Cambridge, England in 1944.

The need for united action was urgent. As a result of these many initiatives some 91 delegates from 21 countries gathered at Woudschoten, Holland, in August 1951 and established the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) as a global administrative body to provide 'the umbrella that national fellowships have lacked for over a century'. The World Evangelical Alliance, which was based in Britain, became the World Evangelical Fellowship. Since then Evangelical Fellowships have mushroomed throughout the world.

The Evangelical Fellowship of India was formed in Akola, Central India in 1951 and the Theological Commission of EFI formed at Yeotmal, where I was teaching in 1962. I was the first organising secretary. Today, National Alliances and Fellowships function in 110 countries with several regional Fellowships. In 1967, a WEF office was set up in Lausanne, Switzerland but has since moved depending on the location of the General Secretary/Director. The Rev Dr Jun Vencer, who was the

General Director of WEF for the last 10 years, based his office in Singapore though he himself operated from Manila.

The need to strengthen the theological base of the WEF in order to speak biblically to changing theological issues and to strengthen the growing number of theological institutions in Asia, Africa and Latin America was still to be recognised. It was not until the 5th General Assembly of WEF at Lausanne in May 1969 that a theological co-ordinator was appointed. Having addressed the Assembly on the need for a united response to the growing number of theological issues of the time, I was invited to become the honorary part-time theological co-ordinator. At that time I was serving as a missionary in India with the Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship (now Interserve) and teaching at the Union Biblical Seminary, Yeotmal, Central India in the departments of Bible and theology.

Parallel to the development of the WEF but not independent of it, Billy Graham, the successful crusade evangelist, called for a World Congress on Evangelism. This took place in West Berlin in 1966. It was sponsored as the 10th anniversary project of the evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* whose founding editor, Carl F.H. Henry, was the Congress chairman. The huge Time Clock in the conference foyer ticked away the numbers who died throughout the world without Christ during the period of the congress. I well remember the long queue of third world delegates in one of the semi-

nars waiting to respond to the agonising issue of the destiny of the millions of people who have never heard the gospel. The call of Carl Henry that 'every evangelist must be a theologian and every theologian an evangelist' challenged all of us deeply.

Following the congress, regional and national conferences were held in Nairobi for East Africa, Singapore for Asia-South Pacific and in Bogota, Colombia, for Latin America. These took place in 1968. Others were to follow. The Berlin Congress and these regional conferences prepared the way for an even greater global conference on evangelism in late December 1973—early January 1974—the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland. Nearly 3,000 delegates from 150 nations took part. The Indian delegation numbered 90. In his opening welcome to the delegates, Billy Graham, the honorary chairman, said, 'We have heard the uncertain voices of modern theologies that speak of a dead God and point us to the wandering stars of moral relativism, linguistic analysts who shred the biblical faith, and religious syncretists who take Christ from his solitary throne and deny his uniqueness and place him in the pantheon of popular deities. We gather in Lausanne to let the earth hear his voice.'<sup>2</sup> These were strong words indeed. Waldron Scott, the then General Secretary of WEF, fol-

---

<sup>2</sup> Douglas, J.D. (ed.), *Let the Earth hear his Voice* (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1975), p. 16.

lowed with an address on *The Task Before Us* in which he surveyed the growth of Christianity in Africa, Asia and Latin America concluding with the words, 'For every person in the world today who professes the name of Jesus, there are two who have never heard his name.'<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the most enduring fruit of this consultation was the Lausanne Covenant of which John Stott was the chief architect. The next year the Lausanne executive committee appointed a number of working groups including the Theology and Education group with John Stott as chairman. In the same year the WEF Theological Commission was inaugurated in London. My overwhelming concern was that these two theological bodies begin working together. The overlap of persons involved has been high. Six of the ten original members of the Lausanne Theology and Education working group were also members of the WEF Theological Commission. My continuing disappointment is that these two evangelical theological groups continue as separate entities. As evangelicals, the baseline of our unity, fellowship and mission in the world is theological. We stand or fall on our understanding of the gospel and obedience to its message. We must manifest our unity to the wider church and to the world.

Thus being part of the WEF Theological Commission was an awesome responsibility. At the Wheaton '83 conference I felt the call of God to leave my global administrative

responsibility and devote the rest of my missionary career to the needs of the church in India. Thus in 1986 I retired to become pastor of a local Indian congregation in a town in north India of perhaps two or three hundred thousand people. There were only two churches in the town, one Protestant—the United Church of North India of which I was the pastor, and the other a Roman Catholic church. Those last six years were the most satisfying of my career. I have become a committed churchman. The motto of the Lausanne movement, 'the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world', is a challenge to us all.

## **II Form follows Function: The Theological Assistance Programme 1969-1975**

After my appointment as the theological co-ordinator of WEF and my return to India from post-graduate research in London, I launched the Theological Assistance Programme (TAP). Its purpose was to encourage the development of national theological commissions and societies and the development of regional associations, to offer them consultative help through lecture tours, seminars, workshops and consultations. TAP's function was also to strengthen theological education throughout the third world, with scholarships for graduate training of faculty and support for library development. During the next five years TAP became a catalyst in developing Theological Education by Extension (TEE) projects and accrediting associations in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and in

---

<sup>3</sup> *Let the Earth hear his Voice*, p. 21.

Europe.

The dictum of the renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright, 'form follows function', became the dictum of TAP. I wrote, 'The church is more than an organisation; it is a living organism whose head is Jesus Christ and whose life is visibly manifest in local churches, individually and collectively. In summary, the church functions as worshipping, witnessing and serving communities.'<sup>4</sup> TAP sought to apply this principle to theological education. With this dictum in mind, TAP kept a low-key structure.

The first step was to recruit competent staff. In the goodness of God, WEF was led to appoint John E Langlois, a bilingual lawyer in the Channel Island of Guernsey, as TAP international administrator and treasurer. John was recommended to me by the Rev Gilbert Kirby, the Principal of the London Bible College and General Secretary of WEF. We met at the London Bible College where John was completing his studies. In the founding of TAP, John was God's gift to WEF. I was the visionary and John the efficient administrator. John and I shared together in several tours; the most notable was our visit to South Africa. In 1980 John became the International Treasurer for WEF, a position he still holds. He initiated the founding of the Religious Liberty Commission at the ninth General Assembly of WEF in Manila in 1992. John was appointed Chairman. He is active in

local politics and is also a member of the Guernsey parliament.

Patricia Harrison of Australia was the third member of TAP staff. She was appointed as Secretary for Education. She pioneered the development of TEE in several countries and lectured extensively in Asia and Africa during 1980-1981. She launched the journal *Theological Education Today* which she edited until she was granted leave of absence to pursue her doctoral studies. Her commitment to WEF and to excellence in theological education was exemplary. In her place, Dr Lois McKinney of Wheaton College became the editor of *Theological Education Today* for a short period until she moved on to other responsibilities.

At the Theological Commission meeting in Stuttgart June 1979, Dr Robert Youngblood was appointed as Associate Administrator/Secretary, to be located in New Delhi, India. In October 1980 he relocated to Holland where he shared an office with the Netherlands Evangelical Alliance. He was seconded to the Theological Commission by the missions department of the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA). Robert made an important contribution to the developing of theological excellence, particularly in the realm of accreditation. He and Dr Paul Bowens were the founders of the International Council of Accrediting Agencies (ICAA) as an arm of the Theological Commission. Later ICAA established its own identity as a separate commission. (It is now known as International Council for Evangel-

---

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Nicholls, *Theological News* 2:2 (April 1971), p. 1.

ical Theological Education or ICETE.) Personally, I regret that this separation took place, as theology and theological education are two sides of the same coin; each needs the other.

The need for supporting administrative staff soon became evident. In 1974 I moved from the Union Biblical Seminary, Yeotmal, to New Delhi where I was the founding Director of the Theological Research and Communication Institute, and from this centre I continued my ministry with the WEF. Through the vision and support of Mr Arthur Pont, the UK director of the Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship (now Inter-serve), I was ably helped by a succession of secretaries seconded by BMMF. The first was Miss Liz Brattle from Australia, then Mr David Muir from the UK and later Mr Lionel Holmes also from the UK. They all carried heavy responsibilities in administration and in helping me with the editing and publishing of *Theological News* and later the *Evangelical Review of Theology* (ERT).

### III From TAP-Asia to the Asia Theological Association (ATA)

The early development of TAP was inspired by recommendations that came from the Asia-Pacific Congress held in Singapore in 1968 as the Asian follow up of the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation. Chua Wee Hian, a participant representing the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IEFS), wrote, 'Theology has never been the forte of the Asian Church. So it is not

at all surprising that it occupied very little prominence at the Congress. Asian pastors and laymen conveniently classify theology as an academic matter and rarely relate it to their evangelism.'<sup>5</sup> Dr Jong Sung Rhee of Korea warned that the dangers of theological dilution, including universalism, liberalism and syncretism, would blunt the cutting edge of evangelism. Dr Rhee stated, 'The theological student with all his knowledge of Barth, Bultmann, Niebuhr and Tillich is often hopelessly unable to share the revealed truth of the Word with his congregation.'

At the Congress, a small core of theologians met several times and requested Dr Saphir Athyal, vice-principal of the Union Biblical Seminary in India, to give leadership to the establishing of Theological Commissions in countries where there were none. There was also encouragement to sponsor national conferences during 1969-1970 with the possibility of a small all-Asian conference late 1970 or early 1971. Dr Athyal followed this up by visiting several theological schools in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Hong Kong and Thailand. In a remarkable way, this small group of theologians and the TAP co-ordinators came together to plan the Singapore Conference. The vision came from the Asian theologians and the structure came from the TAP of WEF. This historic meeting, held 5-7 July 1970, brought together 51 evangelical leaders from

<sup>5</sup> Chua Wee Hian, *Theological News* 1:1 (May 1969), p. 3.

South and South-East Asia, New Guinea and Australasia. A commission of nine members and four consultants began planning for an Asian Centre for Advanced Theological Studies. Another commission of seven members was appointed to survey curriculum and accrediting needs in theological education. Proposals were developed to expand TEE's cooperation with the American group, Committee to Assist Ministry Education Overseas (CAMEO). CAMEO had planned TEE workshops in four countries in Asia and four in Africa for later in 1970. At this historic meeting in Singapore, TAP-Asia was born. A further conference was planned for June 1971 in Singapore. In preparation, John Langlois, the TAP Administrator, spent October 1970 to March 1971 firstly in India with me and secondly in Singapore with Dr Bong Ro at the Discipleship Training Centre.

At this second consultation attended by 23 delegates and 12 observers, TAP-Asia was established as an autonomous fellowship with its own executive committee and regional coordinators. Dr Athyal continued as General Coordinator, Dr Eui Wham Kim was appointed coordinator for North East Asia, Dr Bong Rin Ro for South East Asia and Dr G.J. McArthur for the South Pacific. In addition, functional coordinators were appointed for Evangelical Theological Societies and Commissions, for Bible Teaching Ministries and for TEE. TAP-Asia voted to become a member of TAP-International but retain its autonomous status.

At the consultation, the commis-

sions on Assistance for Theological Education, The Centre for Advanced Theological Education and TEE began planning their programmes. A workshop on 'Programmed Instruction' led by Peter Savage of South America followed immediately on from the consultation. The Centre for Advanced Studies met in Seoul, April 1972. 'Programming and Extension' workshops were held in many countries. *Programming News* was launched. Nené Ramientos launched 'Christ: The Only Way' movement in the Philippines. The Evangelical Fellowship of India established its Theological Society in 1972. The Association For Theological Extension Education in India (TAFTEE) was established with teaching centres in several key cities. Dr Athyal went on a lecture tour to Latin America while I visited many colleges in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. Dr Bong Ro, the TAP-Asia administrator, visited 19 theological colleges in the Philippines. John Langlois, the TAP administrator, visited eight countries in Africa.

This was a *kairos* time of enormous significance. Research centres were developed in Seoul and in India. The latter, established in New Delhi in 1974, was known as the Theological Research and Communication Institute (TRACI). The Asian Centre for Theological Studies and Mission was opened in Seoul in the same year.

Patricia Harrison became the TEE Coordinator and travelled widely throughout Asia, and Bong Ro began publishing a newsletter. This amazing momentum across Asia



between 1970 and 1975 also saw the founding of several new theological schools at the BTh and BD (M Div) levels and the explosion of TEE throughout the region.

The need to evaluate standards now became an urgent issue. In December 1973, TAP-Asia sponsored four consultations in Hong Kong, bringing together those concerned with contextualization, TEE, accreditation, and research centres. Over 30 papers were read and discussed over eight days. A new constitution was drafted for TAP-Asia and its name changed to the Asia Theological Association (ATA). ATA decided to maintain a fraternal link with TAP, but membership in TAP-International was dropped. ATA had come of age. Dr Bong Ro became the Executive Secretary of ATA. These developments made clear that the TAP of WEF should not become a global organization with branches in different continents but rather function as an information and service agency to work with autonomous theological associations in each region. Once again function determined the form.

#### **IV Parallel Developments in Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean**

While these developments were taking place in Asia, parallel movements were developing across Africa and the Caribbean. In March 1969, the Association Theologica Evangelica was initiated, bringing together evangelical theologians in Latin America in the form of a theological society. This new movement was lat-

er known as the Latin American Theological Fraternity (LATF). It focused on creative theological thinking in the Latin American context and establishing standards equivalent to those at a university level. It began publishing in Spanish *Pensamiento Cristiano*. The early leaders include Plutarco Bonilla, Rector of the Latin American Seminary at Costa Rica, Andrew Kirk of the Evangelical Faculty at Buenos Aires (Argentina), René Padilla (also of Buenos Aires), Samuel Escobar and Pedro Arana of Peru, Emilio Antonio Nunes of Guatemala and Robinson Cavacanti of Brazil. While several of these and others became involved in the Theological Commission of WEF, LATF vigorously guarded its autonomy and thus the relationship with the WEF was a fraternal non-structured one. Ross Kinsler of Guatemala had pioneered TEE in the early 1960s. By 1969, 25 seminaries in Latin America and the Caribbean were using extension methods and programme texts.

In the same manner, TAP developed a fraternal relationship with similar structures in Africa. Dennis Clark, the international secretary of WEF, visited a number of theological centres in Africa early in 1969 and reported that evangelical textbooks for both French and English speaking Africa were a priority. As the TAP coordinator, I attended the General Assembly of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM) in February 1973 and assisted in the formation of their Theological Commission. It was agreed to establish two new semi-

naries at the graduate/BD/MDiv-level (one for English speaking Africa and the other for French speaking). Eventually this led to the founding of the Bangui Evangelical Theological Seminary in the Central Africa Republic and to the founding of the Nairobi Evangelical School of Theology in Kenya. It was my privilege along with other members of our staff to visit both these centres in their formative period.

The Theological Commission of AEAM met in Limuru, Kenya in January 1974 and focused on leadership training. It was led by Dr Byang Kato, a Nigerian now based in Nairobi. Byang became the first chairman of the WEF Theological Commission. I again visited Kenya in November 1975 to participate in the meetings of the Theological Commission of AEAM in Nairobi. Later in 1981, John Langlois and I visited South Africa and met with the Association of Evangelicals of South Africa in Johannesburg. I visited several theological schools and John Langlois visited Transkei.

Similar events were taking place in the Caribbean. John Langlois made several visits to the Caribbean and represented the WEF in the forming of the Association of Evangelicals of the Caribbean and in the development of graduate level theological education in Kingston, Jamaica, under the direction of Zenas Gerig.

### **V TAP Becomes the Theological Commission of WEF**

By 1974 the staff of TAP had developed a network of relationships

throughout the Third World. The time had come to strengthen the structure to ensure the effectiveness of the on-going function of its ministry. At the sixth general Assembly of WEF at Chateau D'Oex in Switzerland in July 1974, a Theological Commission of 12 members was formed. Dr Byang Kato was appointed as Chairman and Dr Arthur Climenhaga vice-chairman. The first meeting was held in London 8-12 September 1975. It was agreed that the name TAP should be dropped and that the WEF Theological Commission should become its official designation. Staff portfolios were designated and plans made to extend the commission to between 20 and 30 members with an executive committee representing each region to meet annually.

The Theological Commission was blessed with outstanding chairmen: Dr Byang Kato, Dr Climenhaga, Bishop David Gitari of Kenya and, from 1986, Dr Peter Kusmic of Croatia, and now Dr Rolf Hille of Germany. The strength of the Theological Commission was in the annual meeting of the executive of 6-7 members and the senior staff. It was a time when the Executive examined the accountability of the staff, not always a comfortable experience for us! The past and present were evaluated and plans clarified for the future. The dictum 'function determines structure' was always under review.

The London meeting decided to expand the Commission to 25-30 members to give adequate representation to all the regions and to reflect

the wide spectrum of expertise and of churchmanship. The London consultation identified areas of contemporary theological debate and surveyed areas where theological education needed strengthening. Special attention was given to research centres and to accreditation. Dr. Klaus Bockmuehl was invited to edit the monograph series and I was invited to launch the proposed *Evangelical Review of Theology*.

After the meetings, Dr Byang Kato and I attended the WCC General Assembly at Nairobi November 1975 as associates, together with Professor Peter Beyerhaus of Tübingen. We were given permission to have daily sessions for evangelicals present in order to evaluate the progress of the General Assembly. We were able to influence some of the decisions made in the working groups, especially the one on syncretism. A week later Byang was tragically drowned at Mombasa, Kenya. Africa had lost a fearless theologian, pastor and preacher, and the Theological Commission had lost its dynamic first chairman. I had lost a close friend. Byang had been secretary of the AEAM since 1972. It was a moment of great sorrow for us all.

Members of the Theological Commission staff were encouraged to use their own creative gifting in specialist ministries. David Muir initiated the Research Information Bank whose goal was to build up a bank of current research projects being undertaken and to make details known to our constituency. Current research projects were regularly listed in *Theolog-*

*ical News* from April 1975. David Muir also went on to produce a 40-lesson programmed text entitled *An Introduction to New Testament Greek*.

At a later stage, Dr Jorgen Glen-thoj of Denmark and our staff member, Robert Youngblood, prepared a multi-language WEF *Hymnal* which was released at the General Assembly in 1986. My own ministry included entering into dialogue with wider and often less sympathetic bodies. In addition to the WCC General Assembly in Nairobi in 1975, I represented the Theological Commission at the WCC in Canberra in 1992. I also took part in several ecumenical consultations, the most notable being that of 'Dialogue in Community' in Chiang Mai April 1977. My own contribution in the form of a Bible study was severely criticised by most of the delegates present, but as a member of the Drafting Committee I helped to produce a statement on religious syncretism which was one of the more evangelical statements coming from the WCC.

I was also engaged in dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church and visited the Vatican twice. In India I was engaged in serious dialogue conferences with Muslim leaders, Sikhs and Hindus. The ability to dialogue with people of other Faiths and with ecumenical Christians was a gift from God, sometimes misunderstood by fellow evangelicals. Dr Paul Schrottenboer, the General Secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, convened the Theological Commission project on the Roman Catholic

Church. He was especially gifted in this ministry. A special task force set up at the Theological Commission meetings in Holland in 1980 was commissioned to prepare a statement on Roman Catholic theology and practice. The 40-page document, *A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective on Roman Catholicism*, was presented to the WEF General Assembly in 1986 and received their approval. It is reproduced in ERT October 1986 and January 1987.

At the Theological Commission meetings in Manila, 1992, the study unit on Ecumenical Issues under the convenorship of Dr Paul Schrotenboer was commissioned to enter into a dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church on Scripture and tradition. (Other developments in this work will be mentioned below.)

## **VI An Expanding Publication Programme—From TAP to the Theological Commission**

### *WEF Theological News*

A second development in TAP and the Theological Commission was the development of a wide-ranging publication programme. In May 1969, one year after my appointment, I launched *Theological News*. As an eight-page quarterly newsletter, *Theological News* focused on sharing information on theological issues and news of developments in theological institutions and associations throughout the world, but primarily in the developing world of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. I continued editing *Theo-*

*logical News* until my retirement from WEF in 1986—a total of 69 issues! A year later John Langlois launched *Programming News*, later called *Programming*, to provide information on the development of study materials for Theological Education by Extension. Later Patricia Harrison incorporated *Programming* into *Theological Education Today*, which she edited.

### *Monographs*

The next development took place in 1978 when Dr Klaus Bockmuehl of Switzerland and later of Regent College, Vancouver, was appointed the editor of a series of theological monographs known as *Outreach and Identity: Evangelical Theological Monographs*. During the next seven years Klaus published five monographs by leading evangelical scholars on subjects including Karl Barth's theology of mission; the biblical doctrine of regeneration; contextualisation: a theology of gospel and culture; Evangelicals and social action; pornography: a Christian critique, and Theology and the Third World church. The series was published by Paternoster Press and IVP USA. The monograph on Contextualisation, published in 1977, was later republished in Korean and Portuguese. After Dr Bockmuehl's untimely death in 1989, Dr Bong Rin Ro took up the editorship and published six additional titles. (These and other WEF TC publications are now available on the *WEF Theological Resource Library* CD ROM).

### *Evangelical Review of Theology*

A major development in the Theo-

logical Commission's publication programme was the launching of the *Evangelical Review of Theology* (ERT). At the 6th General Assembly of WEF at Chateau d'Oex, Switzerland in July 1974, Rev John Stott recommended that a digest of international evangelical theology be published on a regular basis. The Theological Commission as TAP became took up the challenge and I launched the first issue of 175 pages in October 1977. It contained original articles and reprints from other publications divided into six sections—Faith and Church, Theology and Culture, Mission and Evangelism, Ethics and Society, Pastoral Ministry and Theological Education. The masthead describing *ERT* stated, 'A digest of articles and book reviews selected from publications world-wide for an international readership, interpreting the Christian Faith for contemporary living.' This purpose of *ERT* remained constant throughout my period of editorship, though separate sections were not retained.

In July 1986 my successor, Dr Sunand Sumithra, became editor and then three years later, Dr Bong Rin Ro took over the role as part of his responsibility as WEF TC Executive Director. In January 1990 I was again asked to take up the editorship, which I did from 1991 to 1998 when Dr David Parker of Brisbane, Australia, became editor. I would like to acknowledge the faithful, patient and professional support of Jeremy Mudditt, the then publisher for Paternoster Press, who has published and distributed *ERT* on behalf

of the WEF from the second issue. I also wish to express my grateful thanks to my wife Kathleen who has proofread and assisted me in the editing of every issue of *Theological News*, *ERT* and the several books of the Theological Commission.

### *Theological Books, Study Units and Consultations*

Since 1976 the Theological Commission has been involved in publishing a wide range of theological books:

*Church and Nationhood*, edited by Lionel Holmes and published in New Delhi in 1978, sold for US\$1.50! This book contained papers presented at the Theological Commission's consultation held at St Chrischona, Basel, Switzerland, September 1976 on the relationship of the Church and State. It dealt with issues of emerging nationalism, Christians living under hostile governments, and issues raised by capitalism and Marxism.

The Theological Commission was responsible for the three volumes that came from the Wheaton '83 consultation on 'The Nature and Mission of the Church', though only *The Church: God's Agent for Change*, edited by Bruce Nicholls, was directly published by the WEF. In eight sections, it included major articles followed by case studies illustrating the themes presented. Unfortunately, stocks of this important publication were lost in a disastrous fire at Paternoster's premises and it was never reprinted. The other volumes from the consultation were *The Church in New Frontiers in Mission*, edited by Patrick Sookhdeo,

and *The Church in Response to Human Need*, edited by Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden. *The Unique Christ in our Pluralist World*, edited by Bruce Nicholls, was published in 1994. It included papers on the same theme given at the Theological Commission's consultation in Manila 1992.

The Faith and Church Study Unit first met at Tyndale House Cambridge in 1982 and on four subsequent occasions under the competent editorship of Dr Don Carson of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield USA. The Faith and Church Study Unit published five volumes through Paternoster Press UK and Baker Book House USA, namely: *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: Text and Context*; *The Church in the Bible and the World: An International Study*; *Teach us to Pray: Prayer in the Bible and the World*; *Right with God: Justification in the Bible and the World*; *Worship: Adoration and Action*.

The Ecumenical Issues Study Unit published two volumes. *A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective on Roman Catholicism* was commissioned by the WEF and presented to the WEF General Assembly in Singapore 1986 for approval. *Evangelical Response to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* was first published in 1992. This was a response to the WCC's study project 'Towards a Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith'. Both volumes were edited by Dr Paul Schrotenboer, the convenor of the Study Unit.

The Ecumenical Issues Study Unit was commissioned by the Theologi-

cal Commission to undertake a special study on 'Scripture and Tradition' with reference to its biblical foundations and as understood in the wider church—ecumenical, Roman Catholic and Orthodox. The eight papers were published in one volume, *ERT* 19:2 (April 1995).

Having clarified its own evangelical understanding of Scripture and tradition, the Ecumenical Issues Study Unit entered the next stage of direct dialogue with Roman Catholic theologians, nominated by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. This took place in Venice, October 1993. Four papers, together with three additional papers, are printed in *ERT* 21:2 (April 1997).

The next dialogue between the Study Unit and Roman Catholic theologians took place at Tantur, Jerusalem, October 1997 on the theme 'Church and Mission'. The papers are printed in the *ERT* 23:1 (January 1999). After Dr Paul Schrotenboer's death 16 July 1998, Dr George Vandervelde took over convenorship of the Ecumenical Issues Study Unit.

The Theological Commission's Ethics and Society Study Unit sponsored a consultation on 'Sharing Good News with the Poor' in New Delhi, October 1993 which brought together biblical studies, theological reflection and outreach ministry on the subject. The book published by this title, and edited by Bruce Nicholls and Beulah Wood, was released by Paternoster Press and Baker Book House in 1996.

The Theological Commission also published a number of titles jointly

with the Theology and Education Group of the LCWE. These volumes included *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility* edited by Bruce Nicholls. These were papers given at the joint consultation on this theme at Grand Rapids, USA in 1982.

In the volume, *God the Evangelist: How the Holy Spirit Works in Bringing Men and Women to Faith*, Dr David Wells of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary USA gave his own interpretation of a jointly sponsored conference on the 'Work of the Holy Spirit and Evangelisation' held May 1985 in Oslo, Norway, while *Turning to God: Biblical Conversion in the Modern World* was Dr Wells' understanding of issues at the consultation on 'Christian Conversion' held in January 1998 in Hong Kong (also jointly sponsored by the WEF and LCWE). I look forward to further cooperation between WEF and LCWE in our theological task of mission and evangelisation.

The Theological Commission sponsored a series of six consultations at High Leigh, near London, England in March 1980 (immediately prior to the 7th General Assembly of WEF). Two of the consultations were jointly sponsored by the Theological Commission and the Lausanne Theology and Education Group, namely 'Simple Lifestyle' and 'Reaching Muslims'. Ronald Sider edited the first volume, *Lifestyle in the '80s: An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle*. Because of the sensitive nature of Muslim evangelism no

report was published from the second consultation. Rather it was seen as a preparation for the COWE consultation in Thailand scheduled for June 1980. Ronald Sider also edited the volume arising from the third consultation 'The Theology of Development in the 1980s', published as *Evangelicals and Development: Towards a Theology of Social Change*.

Of the other three consultations, the most significant was the one on 'The International Community of Accrediting Associations' convened by Dr. Paul Bowers, the Theological Commission's Liaison Secretary for Accrediting Associations. Representatives of accrediting agencies from Asia, Africa, North America, the Caribbean and Europe meeting at High Leigh made the important decision to form an International Council of Accrediting Agencies for evangelical theological education (ICAA). It was agreed that the council would operate with internal autonomy under the sponsorship of the Theological Commission of WEF.

One of my disappointments was the controversy over the publication of *Transformation*. This new journal on social ethics was to be sponsored by the Ethics and Society Study Unit of the Theological Commission and to be edited jointly by Tokunboh Adeyemo (the General Secretary of the AEAM), Ronald Sider and Vinay Samuel. Its purpose was to give a biblical response to the social and ethical issues confronting the contemporary church and to call for creative action. The first issue was released January 1984. Howev-

er, the WEF Executive Council, meeting the next year in Hilversum, Netherlands, while recognizing 'its valid and needed service' feared that that the controversial nature of some of the issues raised and the views of some of the contributors might be divisive to the WEF as a whole. They requested the Theological Commission to 'make arrangements for its continuing publication as an independent journal'. The Theological Commission reluctantly accepted this decision. It was a serious blow to those evangelicals deeply concerned with social and ethical issues. For the work of the Ethics and Society Study Unit, it marked the beginning of their movement away from the Theological Commission and their ultimate collapse. *Transformation* has continued to make a vital contribution as an evangelical witness in the wider ecumenical context. It is now identified with the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies.

A publication programme of a different nature was the launching of the Biblical Library Fund which offered basic evangelical exegetical works to Roman Catholic and Orthodox Seminaries in the Third World. The Library included the Tyndale commentaries, the *New Bible Dictionary* and the *New Bible Commentary*, Harrison's *Introduction to the Old Testament* and Guthrie's *Introduction to the New Testament*. Within a year David Muir had sent out sets to nine seminaries. It was later extended to include evangelical seminaries in Africa.

## VII Consultations: The Building Blocks of Evangelical Cooperation

Over the years the Theological Commission has developed several distinctive functions while forming a unified whole. These are:

1. To build relationships between theologians and their theological institutions across cultural divides and entering into dialogue with people of other theological persuasions, churchmanship and people of other faiths.

2. To defend and promote the historic evangelical Faith with deep conviction but with unconditional love.

3. To rightly interpret the gospel in the plurality of global cultures.

4. To promote victorious living in the market places of society.

5. To strive for understanding of and obedience to the totality of Christ's mission in the world in terms of evangelism, the training and care of believers, compassionate service to the poor and oppressed, justice in society and the responsible stewardship of creation.

6. To strive for excellence in theological education, creativity and relevance in the theological training of the whole church, ordained and lay.

7. To encourage the whole church to communicate the whole gospel to the whole world through God-given teaching, preaching and writing and the use of audio-visual media and electronic technology.

One of the ways to implement these functions has been the effective use of small seminars and workshops, although not neglecting larger national, regional and international



al conferences and consultations. In some of these gatherings our Study Units have been the convenors. In others there has been joint sponsorship with other evangelical bodies, while in others we have in participated as members of the wider evangelical community. The Theological Commission has endeavoured to keep a low key profile, seeking only the glory of God.

Some of the conferences that have been highlights in my own pilgrimage and ministry have been the following:

1. The Berlin Congress on Evangelism (1966)

2. The Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation (LCWE) (1974)

3. The 5th Assembly of WEF in Lausanne (1969)

4. The founding of TAP-Asia (1970, 1971) and later ATA (1974)

5. The 'Church and Nationhood' conference in Switzerland (1976)

6. The 'Gospel and Culture' consultation in Bermuda, and the Willowbank Report (1978), which was sponsored by LCWE but in which Theological Commission members were deeply involved.

7. The multiple Theological Commission conferences at High Leigh near London (1980)

8. The LCWE conference at Pattaya (1980).

9. The consultation on 'The Relationship of Evangelism and Social Responsibility', Grand Rapids (1982)

10. The Third World Theological consultation sponsored by ATA, Seoul (1982)

11. The Wheaton conference on the 'Nature and Mission of the Church' (1983) (this was the high point in my conference ministry)

12. The pastors' retreat in Cairo led by David Howard, Ron Sider and Bruce Nicholls.

13. The Manila conference on 'The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ' (1984)

14. The Oslo conference on 'The Holy Spirit and Evangelisation' (1985)

15. Theological Commission consultation on 'Jesus Christ: Our Liberator and Redeemer' in Singapore (1986)

16. The Hong Kong consultation on 'Conversion' (1986)

17. The consultation on 'The Stewardship of the Environment' at Marcelona, Michigan USA (1992)

18. The consultation on 'Sharing Good News with the Poor' in New Delhi (1993)

## **VIII Reflecting on Lessons Learned**

As I reflect on the history of TAP and the Theological Commission over the years in which I was involved (1969-1980s), I want to make a number of observations and comments on lessons learned which may be of value and encouragement to those now providing the on-going leadership.

1. It is essential that the leadership has a global vision of the importance of theology and theological education in the growth and nurture of evangelical churches and their agencies. But it is equally important to plan to act nationally and regionally.

It is not a question of either globalisation or cultural contextualisation—it is holding both poles together. Admittedly this is a difficult task.

2. The Theological Commission must be a prophetic voice to the churches and to society, courageously pushing the frontiers of biblical understanding and interpretation and speaking with boldness to the escalating social and ethical issues of our time. At the same time the Theological Commission must take a servant role in the life of the national Alliances and Fellowships of the WEF and in the work of the national and regional Theological Commissions and Associations, some of whom function outside the national Fellowships. The prophetic voice is a spokesman for God yet one that is sensitive to the concerns and priorities of people and always acting with compassion.

3. A central issue of the Theological Commission has been the relationship of the gospel to culture. The question of identity is a global issue in our post-modern age but even more so in the developing world where the clash of traditional and modern cultures is acute. The relationship of identity in Christ and an identity in one's national culture is an on-going struggle. The Achilles heel of evangelical Christianity is the danger of fragmentation. Empire building and personal cultism destroy our diversity in unity. Our Theological Commission has not been without its divisive influences. We must live with this tension, faithfully proclaiming the gospel but with sensitivity to cultural values.

4. If function is to determine form then the Theological Commission staff and its members must give priority to relationships, first with God, then with their families, then with each other and always with our constituency. There is no substitute for the staff constantly being on the road, meeting theologians, visiting theological schools, attending conferences, ever listening and being sensitive to people's responses. Building a global network of relationships takes time and it takes people committed to this function. In my own case it meant travelling three to four months a year. A small team of senior staff, each with distinctive gifts and ministries, trusting each other in load-sharing, counselling one another where necessary, is the key to success. I suggest a minimum staff of three and a maximum of five. Every visionary leader needs a good administrator and this I had in John Langlois.

5. Staff accountability is crucial to success. As staff we have sought to be accountable to the Theological Commission Executive. In turn the Executive is accountable to the WEF International Council, to the National Alliances and Fellowships and to the national and regional Theological Associations. This tension in accountability is always with us. It is a sign of strength, not necessarily weakness. In my time, the key to the growth of the Theological Commission was the staff accountability to the Theological Commission Executive, whose seven members met every year with the staff for consultation and evaluation. Between

1975 and 1986 we never missed an annual meeting.

6. Building up a large commission of 45 members was only partially successful. It was difficult to mobilise such a large and diverse group to accept a Theological Commission identity and to motivate them to action. This model has now been dropped. A more successful model has been our small study units of 5-7 members. In my term the most successful have been 'Faith and Church' convened by Don Carson, 'Ethics and Society' convened by Ron Sider and Chris Sugden, 'Theological Education' convened by Patricia Harrison and Robert Youngblood, and 'Eccumenical Issues' convened by Paul Schrotenboer and George Vandervelde.

7. Excellence in theological education has always been a priority of the Theological Commission. We have been a catalyst and in some cases a pioneer in extension education, in developing accrediting associations, in library development, curriculum development and scholarships for faculty training. However, theological education is more than building institutions. It begins with good theology which is biblically grounded, contextually relevant and pastorally orientated. Theological education is more than teaching subjects; it is shaping men and women to know God and to go out to make him known in the world. Men and women need to be trained to be good counsellors, to have a missiological vision and to be accountable to their sponsors. There can be no dichotomy between theological conviction

and ministerial formation. Spiritual formation is fundamental to theological excellence.

8. Financial sustainability is crucial to our task. I believe that if we have the right vision, the right leaders and adequate finance there is no limit to what we can achieve. Donors give according to their confidence in the leadership and the regular accountability of finance received. In the case of the Theological Commission, virtually all our funding came from England, Holland and Germany. To our unnamed donors we owe a great debt of gratitude. Times are changing. The financial load needs to be spread. New resources, especially in Asia, need to be found. I thank God that new organisations have arisen that do better than we were doing. For example, while we gave away \$40-50,000 a year in scholarships for faculty training, the Overseas Council International now is able to invest millions of dollars each year in theological education. We thank God for this development.

9. Investing in people pays eternal dividends. The Theological Commission has been blessed with outstanding leaders who have contributed generously to the movement and who have now moved on to other responsibilities. Our chairman for six years, David Gitari, is now the Archbishop of Kenya. Michael Nazir Ali of Pakistan, a member of the Theological Commission Executive, is now the Bishop of Rochester, England. Robinson Cavacanti is now Bishop of Recife, Brazil. Saphir Athyal, the pioneer of ATA, became the Principal of the Union Biblical

Seminary, Pune, and later a vice-president of World Vision. Bong Ro gave outstanding leadership to ATA for 20 years and is now president of a college in Hawaii. Wilson Chow is an acknowledged statesman of the Chinese world. Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden lead a worldwide ministry in mission theology. Tokunboh Adeyemo, Tite Tienou and René Daidanso are acknowledged leaders in Africa. Peter Kusmic, chairman of the TC for nine years, is the recognized statesman of Eastern Europe. Our present Chairman Rolf Hille, director of the Albrecht Bengel Haus in Tübingen, is one of the most influential evangelical theologians in Europe today. Others have made outstanding contributions through their writings. To mention a few—Don Carson, Ron Sider, Christopher Wright, Dick France, Klaus Bock-

muehl, Klaas Runia, Henri Blocher, Miriam Adeney, René Padilla, Antonia Nunez, Andrew Kirk, Valdir Steuernagel—all have been active in the Theological Commission.

10. Last but not least the apostle Paul's example of endurance in running the race and not turning back has characterised the leadership of the Theological Commission. We thank God for their faithful persistence through success and failure. Some have finished their race; others are still pressing on. The stability of the Theological Commission depends on stable continuity and constant input of new people and with new vision.

The words of the prophet Micah (6:8) have long been my guide: 'And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God'.

## FIRESTORM OF THE LORD

Stuart Piggin

Drawing extensively from the revival theology of Jonathan Edwards and Martin Lloyd-Jones, Stuart Piggin offers a systematic, biblical and pastoral study of revival. He writes from the head and the heart, with plenty of lively illustrations and real-life testimonies and quotations. Piggin defines revival, looks at its biblical basis, identifies the marks of genuine revival and studies the phenomenon thoroughly across historical and denominational lines. After laying this groundwork, Piggin offers much valuable and practical advice for individuals and churches on preaching, praying, planning and paying for revival. Finally, he explores the possibilities for God's choosing to work in such a way again in the next great awakening. Revival, he insists and proves, is a firestorm of the sovereign Lord through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Stuart Piggin** is Master of Robert Menzies College, associate of the Department of History at Macquarie University; Principal of the School of Christian Studies; Principal of the Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity; Honorary Executive Director of the Macquarie Christian Studies Institute.

1-84227-031-1 / 229 x 145mm / p/b / 265pp / £14.99

**Paternoster Press, PO Box 300, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 0QS, UK**