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Mission Leadership and Christian Theological Research

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Introduction

It was the author's privilege to be a member of the Unit on Ethics and Society of the TC and to take part in its studies from 1980, especially on Evangelicals and Development, Issues of Lifestyle, and the Relation between Evangelism and Social Responsibility. Later he followed Ron Sider as convenor, and led the visit of members of the Unit to South Africa in 1989 during the emergency period; he also led the study on the Environment in 1992 in collaboration with the Au Sable Institute. He was also part of the editorial team of *Evangelical Review of Theology* (ERT) while working in India from 1978-1983, and of *Transformation Journal* which from its founding in 1984

until 1988 was published under the auspices of the TC.

The team working on these issues of ethics and society was convinced that mission is the mother of theology: that the critical work that theology needs to do is set by the questions that are posed to Christian scripture and tradition as a result of obedience to Christ and the gospel in engagement with the world. Thus, the Unit on Ethics and Society engaged with the question of the relation between evangelism and social responsibility, asked what was the Christian contribution to development, and explored the nature of Christian mission (usually focused on persons) with relation to the environment. In so doing it hopefully helped to avoid some of the blind spots of theology in the early twentieth century. Regrettably, despite a century of mission engagement with other cultures, theology as a discipline did not engage with the status of other faiths,

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issues of poverty, or ancestor worship which occupied the attentions of those engaged in mission. The reason for this was the imprisonment of theology taught in universities in the categories of the Enlightenment. These suggested that theology could operate only as an objective study of texts and history which would be compromised by the enthusiasm and partisanship of those engaged in mission.

This article seeks to take the story forward. Those who worked with these concerns in the seventies and eighties did not stop there. While they handed their responsibilities in the TC on to others, they continued to pursue the vision of mission-oriented theology in various ways. This article will trace some of that movement as it has been expressed in theological and mission research, in professional Christian training, in leadership development and in publications.

A movement for holistic mission

What had begun in the Theological Commission was a movement for holistic theology and mission. The Unit on Ethics and Society in particular brought together those who were taking this forward in many parts of the world: Eastern Europe, Argentina, Kenya, India. At the same time the Lausanne Covenant in 1974 had expressed a holistic direction for mission. Over the next decade global evangelicalism wrestled with the biblical, theological, and missiological dimensions of holistic mission at consultations which the TC jointly sponsored with the Lausanne Movement, culmi-

nating in the Consultation on the Relation of Evangelism and Social Responsibility (CRESR) in 1982 and the Wheaton Consultation on the Church in Response to Human Need in 1983. Rene Padilla points out that 'Wheaton 83 completed the process of shaping an evangelical social conscience, a process in which people from the Two Thirds World played a decisive role. It made it evident to evangelicals that evangelism cannot be divorced from meaningful involvement with people in all their needs.'¹

In one sense the Wheaton Consultation drew to a close the process begun in the Lausanne Covenant which specified but did not define the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. Wheaton spoke of 'Mission as Transformation'.² 'According to the biblical view of human life then, transformation is the change from a condition of human existence contrary to God's purposes to one in which people are able to enjoy fullness of life in harmony with God. This transformation can take place only through the obedience of individuals and communities to the gospel of Jesus Christ, whose power changes the lives of men and women by releasing them from the guilt, power and consequences of sin, enabling them to respond with love toward God and toward others, and

1 Rene Padilla and Chris Sugden, *How Evangelicals Endorsed Social Responsibility* (Grove Booklets on Ethics) (Nottingham: Grove, 1985), p. 17.

2 For a collection of texts which define and develop this understanding see Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, *Mission as Transformation* (Oxford: Regnum, 1999).

making them “new creatures in Christ”.³

But in another sense the Wheaton statement was only the beginning. With the debate settled for what turned out to be a generation, mission activists globally began to work out what holistic mission meant in relation to economics, culture, religions, enterprise, politics, HIV/AIDS, sexuality. Many new questions arose for mission which were not questions of strategy (of how to) but more of content (what is the gospel when it is to be stated and expressed in a particular context).

What made the legacy of the Lausanne Covenant and the TC of the 70s and 80s so influential was the nature of participation that they represented. They were both genuinely representative of world Christianity. Lamin Sanneh defines ‘World Christianity’ as ‘the movement of Christianity as it takes form and shape in societies that previously were not Christian’ where ‘Christianity was received and expressed through the cultures, customs and traditions of the people affected’. ‘Global Christianity’ ‘on the other hand, is the faithful replication of Christian norms and patterns developed in Europe’.⁴

The Lausanne Movement and the TC were genuinely representative of

senior Christian leaders around the globe who were mission leaders, bishops, and training college principals in their own right. For that reason the platform they provided for such leaders to come together, discover each other and what God was doing around the world, proved highly creative and influential in developing evangelical theological reflection and practice. They were not the only players on the world scene at the time, but others were more characterized by Lamin Sanneh’s description of Global Christianity: they globalized certain mission strategies such as city-wide crusades, literature distribution or key points for personal evangelism, but did not give birth to evangelical theological development. Indeed, as noted below, research into one such agency committed to literature distribution is showing that, in an Asian culture under Asian leadership, it was transformed into a unique indigenous people-movement.

This reflection and practice was then embedded in the life of the world evangelical community as it was given institutional form. One institution that must be acknowledged here is World Vision. Ed Dayton and MARC were important partners in the decade of debate from 1974-1983. World Vision as an organization took forward the holistic understanding of ‘Mission as Transformation’ and embedded it into their organizational vision and planning.⁵ Recently they have taken holis-

3 ‘Transformation: The Church in Response to Human Need’ para 11 in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds.), *The Church in Response to Human Need* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, reprinted Wipf and Stock 2002).

4 Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) p. 22. (Ed.: this book is reviewed elsewhere in this issue).

5 See especially Bryant Myers, *Walking with the Poor: principles and practices of transformational development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999).

tic understanding a step further by insisting that it means that the local church is the major actor in issues of development in a community.

From movement to institutions

A number who had given leadership in the TC in the seventies and eighties identified a particular gap in the facilities available to train senior leadership in the growing church in the two-thirds world. Post-graduate doctoral research by two-thirds world scholars was at that time undertaken almost exclusively in European or North American institutions. This had two important weaknesses. First the research undertaken was significantly determined by the interests and expertise of the western-based faculty. Inevitably the context where the research was undertaken would determine the content of the research. Secondly, there was a high risk that such leaders would experience a number of irresistible pressures to remain in such contexts after graduation. As a result the very issues raised by mission into which research was needed were lost sight of, and those who were highly trained to investigate them often, for very understandable reasons, were denied to the leadership of the growing churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Those from the two-thirds world who had led the TC Unit on Ethics and Society in the seventies and eighties were concerned to preserve the momentum of mission-based theology that they had begun to develop together. As they grew in seniority

they dreamt of and succeeded in founding their own institutions in the two-thirds world to give institutional expression to these concerns, and to train a new generation in what had given life to them.

So several institutions were founded in the seventies and early 80s, including the Evangelical Theological Seminary, Osijek, Croatia; St Andrew's College of Theology and Development, Kabare, Kenya; the Akrofi-Kristaller Memorial Centre for Mission Research and Applied Theology, Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana; the Kairos Institute, Buenos Aires, Argentina; the Orlando Costas Faculty, Lima, Peru and the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. Part of the vision was also to recapture for a strongly biblical gospel other institutions founded by earlier generations which had adopted other agendas. So others invested time in theological colleges located in Malaysia, Kenya and Singapore to enable them to fulfil a strongly biblical agenda. Thus a movement for mission-based theology gave birth and also rebirth to institutions to express it and train others. This reminds us that movements for renewal have to find institutional expression if they are to last more than a generation. Much of the energy and vision of the TC of the seventies and eighties was therefore channelled into establishing institutions. This does not represent the decline of a movement, but is part of securing it.⁶

⁶ See *Strengthening our Bridges: Report submitted to the World Vision International Board from the Commission on the Church* (World Vision, Monrovia).

A Two Thirds World Movement

A further facet of the TC in the seventies and eighties was that it provided space for those from the two-thirds world to identify and address their own agendas in mission. This was the age when modernity in mission was at its height. Uniformity is part of modernity and this was the age of global mission conferences whose aim was to produce an overall vision, or strategy for global mission. It became clear as conference succeeded conference that the contribution of those who lived where the church was actually growing was in fact only secondary—they were good field studies demonstrating the validity of one or other of a range of views of mission that emanated from outside, but not participants and contributors.

In 1980 the Consultation on World Evangelisation at Pattya (the follow-up to Lausanne 1974) was called to consider strategies for world evangelization. One of the main ideas was identified as sharing the gospel with various people groups. These groups were defined primarily as religious: they were identified as Hindus, Moslems, Nominal Roman Catholics etc. These groupings were determined by the conference planners who were dominated by western missiology. Thus evangelical missiology from the West was defining people's context by their religious affiliation. But a group of two-thirds-world theologians and some from the west posed the view that the context was the total setting in which people find themselves—the social, economic and political institutions that determine their lives and the structures behind them—not just one part

of the total.

The result was that a team of people at the consultation who had worked in the TC (as well as in other settings) decided that it was time to hold a consultation where the mission and theologies of the growing churches themselves should set the agenda. The first of these conferences was held in Bangkok, Thailand in 1982 and published its findings as 'Sharing Jesus in the Two-Thirds World'.⁷ A second was held in Mexico in 1984 on the theme of the Holy Spirit, and a third at Kabare, Kenya in 1987 on the theme of the Living God.⁸ At the third conference this informal network styled itself the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians (INFEMIT). INFEMIT has claims to be a unique initiative in modern times for global mission action and reflection arising from the non-western world.

Participants at the 1982 conference addressed the issue of doctoral research and senior leadership training. They identified principles that needed to be adhered to and then sought a mechanism to enshrine them. One was that research should be rooted in the context of mission by people actively engaged in such mission. A second was that researchers should have access to the best of international university resources but without being alienated from their cultures and without uprooting or relocating their families. These principles gave the shape to

7 Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds.), *Sharing Jesus in the Two Thirds World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1986).

8 Published in *Transformation* Volume 5 No 2 (April 1988), pp. 21-23.

the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. OCMS is located in the heart of the academic resources of Oxford. Its research degrees are now validated by three United Kingdom universities. Its ninety current research students and forty graduates have engaged in a process of research study that looks at the gospel as it is lived in the lives of men and women and as it engages in the societies in which it is set.⁹ Professor Lamin Sanneh identifies this method of study as both different and innovative. It expresses the one gospel of the one Lord and the one Christ which affirms rather than evades what people in many cultures experience and which validates, ennobles and enriches human life.

Topics for research

There is, of course, a great deal of research going on in many institutions, Christian and secular throughout the world. However, much of it remains unavailable to the Christian public, and unconsulted by those who have responsibility for leadership of Christian mission and organizations. The author would like to take the opportunity of this celebratory series on the work of the WEA Theological Commission to share the fruits of the enormous investment of people's lives and resources (particularly from the two-thirds-world) in innovative research based in their own countries on the critical issues of Christian mission. On average each project has taken the

researcher five years of detailed and focused study. John Kessler, a veteran missionary in Latin America, argues¹⁰ that leadership is the most vital factor in contributing to the quality and impact of mission in the two-thirds world. So here follows a digest of some of the most noteworthy research topics conducted through OCMS which will hopefully show the need for and value of context based research.

Christian leadership

Significant research has been and is being carried out on leadership of the people of God. Dr Gideon Githiga, now Bishop of Thika in Kenya, examined the role of the churches in Kenya from the end of the colonial era to the controversial 1992 elections. He traced how the church had moved from being a partner with the colonial regime, to being a similar partner with the new independent state in order to establish its national credentials, to emerging as the only substantial force in the country opposing the excesses of President Moi, especially in abolishing the secret ballot. His analysis was that the church leaders played a role that continued the function of leaders in traditional religions to be a protector of the people against the extreme use of power. His book¹¹ was published in Kenya and was a major resource for the

⁹ Abstracts of theses produced through the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies can be viewed on its website www.ocms.ac.uk.

¹⁰ In private conversation with the author, November 2003.

¹¹ Gideon Githiga, *The Church as the Bulwark against Authoritarianism: Development of Church-State Relations in Kenya, with particular reference to the years after Political Independence 1963-1992* (Oxford: Regnum/Uzima 2001).

churches in the preparation for the 2002 elections which saw the removal of President Moi.

A new researcher is continuing the story by examining the role and impact of the churches in their partnership with NGOs in addressing constitutional reform in Kenya. Bishop Stephen Mwangi, the second most senior bishop in the Anglican Church of Kenya, is currently completing research on why bishops have exercised such a significant role in the life of the nation. His findings will be an important resource for understanding the nature and role of Christian leadership in Africa. Stanley Granberg, a North American missionary in Kenya, examined how leaders were developed in the Churches of Christ in the Meru District of Kenya and concluded that the behaviour of leaders is more critical than their characteristics of age, education, wealth and experience in producing organizational effectiveness.

While leading a theological college in Karachi, Pakistan, Dr Pervaiz Sultan examined the contrasting leadership styles of two bishops in the Church of Pakistan, particularly in the way their dioceses engaged in development. He concluded that the personalities and convictions of the bishops were the most decisive factor in the way the dioceses viewed and conducted their mission.¹²

Similar research on leadership was

conducted by Joshua Hong, now director of the Church Growth Institute of the Yoido Full Gospel Church, Seoul, Korea. He examined the leaders of Korean mega-churches, such as David Yonggi-Cho, to understand the mutual relationship they had with their followers. He concluded that the founding pastor had an enormous impact on the success of these mega-churches, and that therefore the issue of inter-generational transfer of leadership would be critical for their continuance. His research has been published in Korean, as it is especially valuable as many mega-churches come to address the issue of transition from their founders.

A biblical study on the role of monarchical leaders was carried out by Tamas Czovek. The narratives of Saul, David and Solomon were examined to reveal what qualities God looked for and blessed in those who gave leadership among his people.¹³

Christian witness by and among poor people.

Poor people are very religious. A major aspect of the context for many Christians since the origins of the Christian movement has been its *engagement with those of other faiths*. Dr Ivan Satyavrata, while principal of a leading Pentecostal theological college in India, undertook research to explore whether there was any continuity between the religious experience and philosophy of the Hindus and Christian spirituality

12 *Church and Development: A case study from Pakistan* (FACT Publications 2001, St Thomas Theological College, Trinity Close, Abdullah Haroon Road, Karachi 75530, Pakistan).

13 Published in *Transformation* as 'Three Seasons of Charismatic Leadership', Vol 19 No 4 (October 2002) and Vol 20 No 1 (January 2003)

that could be spoken of as fulfilment. He found there to be some significant if limited continuity. Dr David Singh explored a Muslim sect which added inner revelation to the revelation through the text of the Quran to explore whether the experience of immediate revelation could be a link between Christian and Islamic religious experience.¹⁴ Dr Frank Adams, the general secretary of the African Baptist Fellowship explored the possible continuity between the Odwira festival in Ghana and the Christian communion service as a means of community building. Dr John Magumba of Uganda Christian University examined the possible contribution of Baganda traditional pastoral practices to enrich Christian ministry in Uganda. Rev Geoff Morgan researched the role of developing new forms of worship in mission in East Africa.

For Dr Samuel Jayakumar, then a faculty member and now the principal of the Madras Bible Seminary, the encounter between Christian faith and Hindu religious reality was best expressed and examined in the encounter of the Dalits (outcastes) with Christian faith in the nineteenth century. In his thesis, which has become a textbook in Indian universities,¹⁵ he argued that it was Christian conversion that was responsible for the development of people's consciousness of being Dalit and the need and

opportunity to take action. This was in contrast to the prevailing ideology that Christian faith had suppressed Dalit yearnings for freedom.

Saheb John Borgall from India is currently completing research on a twentieth century movement to Christ among rural poor people in Karnataka State India. This began as a ministry of literature distribution but has been developed, most successfully by the poor themselves into a form of community evangelism, without, regrettably, the support of the original ministry.

In witness among the poor, Christians have especially engaged in *ministries of education*. Dr Jonathan Ingleby, himself an educationalist of many years experience in India and now vice-principal of a mission training college, researched competing mission strategies in India in education. One school of thought focused on training leadership for the church by educating the high-caste to reject Hindu religion and practices through the application of western rationalism. A second school focused exclusively on educating Christian converts, almost all from the poorest people, to provide leadership in the mission churches. History has shown that the second strategy produced the more lasting fruit.¹⁶ A typical development in Christian education is that its quality is most appealing to the elites and gradually institutions founded to educate the poor become the preserve of elites. To remedy this in a Catholic order, Sister Rita

14 David Singh, *Sainthood and Revelatory Discourse: An Examination of the Basis for the Authority of Bayan in the Mahdawi Islam* (New Delhi: ISPCK/Regnum, 2003).

15 Samuel Jayakumar, *Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion* (New Delhi: ISPCK/Regnum, 1999).

16 J. C. Ingleby, *Missionaries, education and India: Protestant missionary education in the long nineteenth century* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2000).

Rozario undertook research on the caste factor among prostitutes in Bombay for which her order, now running elite schools, had originally been founded. Other research is currently being carried out on Christian education for ministry in African churches.

A most innovative study of *literacy development* among the poor was undertaken by Sharon Samson in Ethiopia. She found that literacy programmes were failing in their goal of developing 100% literacy in those who took part in the programmes. The cascade effect of these programmes in promoting literacy was not being accomplished since it was always assumed that 100% literacy was needed before people could teach others. She pioneered a process of training semi-literates to teach children to read, using the medium of the scriptures in the churches. This involved examining all the current theories of literacy and developing her own theoretical basis for understanding literacy education. She field tested her programme and was delighted to discover that it was effective.

Malcolm Hunter studied the effect of decades of Christian mission among *nomadic pastoralists* in Kenya and concluded there was a need for inclusion of their spiritual values in planning for development and forms of Christian ministry which do not depend on a settled existence.

Micro-enterprise development

The collapse of Marxism as a viable and credible alternative (and thus the end to the ideological conflict over

development) led to an affirmation that widespread property ownership, either in a market-economy or a mixed system, tends to decentralise power and prevent totalitarianism. This led to an embrace of micro-enterprise development and then research on enterprise as a bearer of value and initiator of change. The success of Micro-enterprise development has been charted by financial statistics of pay-back rates, and many anecdotes. But research has now been done on its impact in Honduras by Ken Van der Weele, the President of Opportunity International, a major MED organization; on the factors of ethos and management which affect its sustainability in Kenya by Anne Kesterton; and its operation in Uganda by Ephraim Gensi the chairman of Ugafode, a Ugandan church-based MED organization. Osvaldo Munguia, director of Mopawi, an evangelical relief and development agency in Honduras, is researching the transition from a subsistence based economy to an enterprise based economy in the Mesquite area of Honduras. One of the current unresolved areas for further research is whether micro-enterprise-led-development can function without the presence of strong non-economic inputs into a community to address the culture of poverty.

The end to the ideological ban on religion and the focus on community participation in development has raised issues of the contribution of traditional cultures and religions to development. Dr Bambang Budijanto, now Asian director of Compassion, examined the role of Christian, Islam and Hindu faith in contributing to development in Java. There is still research to be done on the role of the religious poor in their own

development; on the extent to which human rights can be a basis for development and on what basis human rights can be advanced.

Pentecostal movement

The major Christian movement among the poor in the twentieth century, and indeed the major social movement in the world in the twentieth century was the growth of the Pentecostal movement. Mainstream churches have for many years suggested that their theology and practice is other-worldly, personalistic and lacks a social theology: a classic example of the Christian faith being an opiate of the people. Douglas Petersen, one time area director for Central America of the Division of Foreign Missions of the Assemblies of God conducted research into Pentecostals in Central America and discovered that, while they may not have a social theology, Pentecostal churches are a social theology by giving people identity and a role to contribute to their communities.¹⁷ Joseph Suico, a pastor of a slum community church in the Philippines, pursued similar research in the Philippines, comparing the social role of the Pentecostal churches with that of Roman Catholic Churches in the same area. He discovered that there was no difference at all in the actual social practice of these two denominations. However, when it was noted that the Roman Catholic Church had an international resource of Catholic teaching and action to guide the congregation, and

the Pentecostals had to develop their own involvement and rationale for themselves, it becomes clear that the Pentecostal faith had actually empowered its adherents to develop their own theology, motivation and direction for community engagement. Israel Ortiz is currently completing research on Pentecostal social engagement in Guatemala.

The social involvement of evangelicals in Peru was studied by Dario Lopez. In research conducted in Spanish he examined the theological contribution made by the National Evangelical Council of Peru to the development of an understanding of human rights from a focus on religious freedom to include political involvement in engagement with the issues raised by the Shining Path guerrilla movement.

Moo Youl Choi, a pastor from Korea, examined the charge that evangelical churches in Korea were uninvolved in social ministries. He looked at churches across the theological spectrum, and discovered that those that focused on evangelism were more deeply involved in social concern for the lives of people than those churches which worked on producing social statements and policies as part of their life.

The research at OCMS in the field of ministry among and with poor people has given birth in 2003 to the Institute for Development Research which will do research on the nature, means and impact of holistic transformational development based on a biblical understanding of Christian faith.¹⁸

¹⁷ Douglas Petersen, *Not by Might nor By Power: A Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern in Latin America* (Oxford: Regnum, 1996).

¹⁸ See the website for the Institute for Development Research on the OCMS website www.ocms.ac.uk

The importance of research for mission leadership

What is remarkable about this survey of research and study on mission practice is that, while the various examples form a cohesive whole, the topics were selected individually by the researchers themselves, arising out of the pressing local issues for their ministry. Thus, the very contexts of ministry have shown that issues of leadership and the nature of holistic ministry among the poor in religious contexts are urgent matters for Christian study and reflection. This survey also shows that mission can benefit from the discipline and the studies of the academy in order to understand itself, relate itself to the rest of human activity, and based on tested results engage in fruitful strategic planning.

Research can dispel myths that surround Christian mission and imprison the minds of Christian leaders. For example, it is simply not true that Pentecostals are not socially involved—rather the research has shown that our definitions of social involvement have been shaped by particular cultural and political notions which have prevented us from seeing the way the gospel brings identity and empowerment to marginalized people. Similarly, it is not true that education of poor Christians makes no contribution to developing leadership for the church—instead, the research has shown that Christian education targeted to the elites will be subverted to entrench their own power, while among the poor it is welcomed as part of their liberation and a resource for them to contribute to the church. Again, it is not true that there is no continuity between Christian religious

experience and religious experience in some other faith traditions—it is clear from research that we have often limited the scope of divine engagement with people's lives prior to their entry into the Christian community.

Researchers are often asked in what field their research lies. 'Mission studies' relates to all the issues that are raised by the church's engagement with the world in pursuit of its mission to proclaim and express the kingdom of God. These will often involve 'trans-disciplinary' studies—in other words, taking the insights of one discipline and making an original contribution to another discipline in the light of these insights. It must be clear in which discipline the original contribution is being made. However, the notion of 'Iron Curtains' between different disciplines is one which 'mission studies' firmly rejects, not least because it refuses to be isolated into a marginal discipline itself.

The record of the last twenty years shows that at the time of writing, 100% of those who have undertaken research in this way through OCMS are still engaged in the area in which their research was undertaken. The usual result for universities in the United Kingdom is that only 40% of research graduates ever continue work in the field of their research. Further, all those who have completed research at OCMS have returned to continue in their context of mission and are giving significant creative leadership. Over one third of all the research produced has been published, mostly in the countries which are the subject of the research. Thus both the researchers and the fruits of their research are available to

churches and Christians in the countries involved.

In an important way this research process represents the democratization and de-Brahminisation of academic study. In India the Brahmins keep religious knowledge to themselves and use it as the basis of their power. This restriction is no preserve of the Brahmins—it is part of fallen human nature expressed in the religious sphere. Christians are not exempt from its temptations. The possession of a research degree, the status it confers and the knowledge that is gained is in some contexts a path to advancement and a basis for exercising power. The actual content of the research and the knowledge gained is rarely shared.

Locating Christian research in the context of the growing churches where mission is being done, making the subject matter of research the issues that are raised in the challenges of mission to surrounding cultures and of surrounding cultures to mission, and publishing the results of the research so that it is available and current for the churches are all processes that need to be intentional if the church is to benefit from research done on Christian mission.

Much research is being done on Christian mission, often by non-Christians who have discovered that Christian mission is often the best source for records of the past. However, as in the case of a recent study of the church in Africa, these studies are often undertaken to prove points against Christian mission. Some are based on assumptions that cultures should be left independent of outside influences, or that Christian mission is necessarily a western faith. Christians cannot

leave the field empty of its own scholars.

Preachers can make easy points about Ph.Ds standing for 'permanent head damage' and about the irrelevance of much theological education. Some of these throw-away remarks may contain elements of truth, but much more importantly, they are part of a common discourse that marginalizes the role of study in effective Christian mission. As the Archbishop of Canterbury pointed out in a lecture at Oxford University in 2002, the very notion of universities was founded in the Christian understanding that there needed to be discipleship of the mind.

If the brightest and best are convinced that academic research is irrelevant for mission, and if leaders of churches and organizations think that the findings of research are irrelevant to their own planning for mission effectiveness, then we will raise a generation of Christian leaders who will always be subject to the trends set by others. They will be good managers of processes and strategies that have been inherited from their forbears or from outside agencies. They will be markets for the latest 'how-to' strategy from those cultures that promote success. However, they will not be in a position to make their own contribution to theological development and mission strategy based on their own tested knowledge of their cultures, or of the gospel, or of mission practice. They will not be transformational leaders able to impart and sustain a vision of where the church needs to go in its mission and ministry in their contexts.

Furthermore, the current international climate for Christian involve-

ment in communities is set by President George Bush and his commitment to supporting the contribution of Faith Based Organisations. It is also influenced by the research of the World Bank which showed that Faith Based Organisations make a significant contribution in poor communities; for example, churches in Africa are in contact with 90% of the poor, while NGOs are in contact with only 30%.¹⁹

However, a backlash against this has already begun. It has been suggested that it is inappropriate that government funds should be made available to support the work of particular religious groups. Major organizations such as Tear Fund and World Vision have had their support from government funds questioned on this basis. It is therefore most important that significant research be done by Christians into the impact and effect of faith based organizations²⁰ in order to combat the challenge of secular fundamentalism to the legitimacy of Christian organizations receiving public funds. What such secular fundamentalism is suggesting is that care for humanity can and even should be divorced from religious convictions. This notion must be resisted.

¹⁹ See Deryke Belshaw, Robert Calderisi and Chris Sugden (eds.) *Faith in Development, partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa* (Oxford/Washington: World Bank/Regnum 2001), pp. 9, 45, 46.

²⁰ For example, C. B. Samuel, the former director of EFICOR India, suggests that 80% of all care for children at risk in India is undertaken by Christians who form less than 3% of the population.

Research based on mission practice

The library and the doctoral programme are not the only locations for Christian research. As OCMS' partnership with a number of Christian training organizations developed, a further gap in theological education was identified. There appeared to be little opportunity for Christian professionals engaged in ministries of development, or communication or similar practical ministries to develop their skills or explore what it meant to serve as Christians in these fields. Accordingly, a process was begun to develop courses that enabled practitioners with experience in these fields to undertake full-time or part-time study which combined the development of technical expertise with engagement with biblical resources to develop an understanding of the Christian contribution to the field. These courses at MA level in development have been offered in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Tanzania in partnership with World Vision; in India in Pastoral Theology in partnership with TAFTEE, and they are being developed for launch in the Middle East in 2004 in the field of Communication Practice. In these courses produced in East Africa, for example, forty dissertations were based on field experience—they covered topics such as African Perspectives on the Rights of Children and their theological significance;²¹ Female Genital Mutilation and its effects on the education and advance-

²¹ By David Mwesigwa Ntulume.

ment of Christian Maasai Girls.²² Similar field-based MA courses are offered by a consortium of the Akrofi-Kristaller Memorial Centre, Ghana, St Andrews Kabare Kenya and The Evangelical House of Studies at the University of Natal, South Africa on African Theology; and at the Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia at Trinity College Singapore on Christianity in Asia.

A most creative development has been the start of a part-time course in HIV/AIDS pastoral care. This is being piloted at St Paul's Theological College, Limuru, Kenya in a joint partnership between the college, Medical Assistance Programme (MAP) International and OCMS. People involved in HIV/AIDS ministry are studying by distance methods at Master's level, examining the medical, social, cultural, pastoral and theological dimensions of providing pastoral care for those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. Each of the twenty-five participants, who include a bishop and the wife of a church moderator, has to recruit and train twenty other people in a local group. These local groups are made up of people in direct contact with at least twenty people who are infected, affected or at risk of HIV/AIDS—for example sufferers, orphans and teenagers at risk. Thus this programme engages with ten thousand people infected, affected or at risk from HIV/AIDS. Part of the study is to research the incidence of AIDS in a particular community, and also to develop and draw on theological resources to address the cultural and

pastoral issues that are raised.

Mission research, theology and worship.

Lamin Sanneh has observed²³ that such studies are not speculation that has no root or grounding in life as it is lived. Rather the tools of study are brought to bear on Christian life and experience so that Christian practice is illuminated. Thus there is a rootedness to study and reflection. People in many different cultures are challenged by the one gospel to engage their varied experience in the light of the Word of God. This process reveals the depths of the riches of God's blessings, the rainbow colours of his love.

The research process also clearly indicates that the gospel and its mission are not matters of private feelings or preference. The gospel and its proclamation are public, conducted in the public realm, open to public inspection and subject to the normal rules of public evidence. The gospel is shown by such studies to build and nurture community and to be good news for the poor. So the gospel is shown to be God's grace to the poor and reveals divine benevolence. The work of theology is therefore to a certain extent an act of worship, since it is part of our discovery, exploration and response to the work of God's amazing grace.

This essay has traced the development of evangelical theology by those who engaged the biblical resources with the challenges of ministry among and with the poor. They discovered

22 By Simeon Oli Masi.

23 In private conversation with the author, December 2003.

resources in the Bible to express mission as transformation of all our relationships so that God's will shall be done in society and his love be experienced by all communities, especially the poor; to see the Holy Spirit as empowering people in their life in society; to see the calling to be sons and daughters of God through Christ as giv-

ing people a new identity; to look for the work of God in people's cultures and contexts prior to Christian mission. Such developments have come as those engaged in mission have brought their questions from mission to the scrutiny of both the Bible and the academy.

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