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TSF BULLETIN
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The Dubuque Declaration

We declare our continuing commitment to the truths set forth in the Basis of Union and the Constitution of the United Church of Christ.

We perceive an erosion and denial of these truths in our church. Because of our concern for the people of our churches and the well-being of our denomination as a member of the body of Christ, we are called by God to make this confession:

1. We confess our faith in the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2. We confess that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man. Because of our sin and estrangement from God, at the Father's bidding the Son of God took on flesh. Conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, He became like us in all things apart from sin. He died on the cross to atone for our sin and reconcile us to God and on the third day rose bodily from the dead. He is the sole head of the church, the Lord and Savior of us all, and will one day return to glory, power, and judgment to usher in the kingdom of God in its fullness.

3. We hold that the Bible is the written Word of God, the infallible rule of faith and practice for the church of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures have binding authority on all people. All other sources of knowing stand under the judgment of the Word of God.

4. We affirm that the central content of the Scriptures is the gospel of reconciliation and redemption through the atoning sacrifice of Christ and His glorious resurrection from the grave. The good news is that we are saved by the grace of God alone, the grace revealed and fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus Christ, which is received only by faith. Yet this faith does not remain alone but gives rise to works of piety, mercy, and justice. The Holy Spirit, who spoke through the prophets and apostles, calls us today, as in the past, to seek justice and peace for all races, tongues and nations.

5. We confess as our own the faith embodied in the great ecumenical and Reformation creeds and confessions, finding them in basic conformity with the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.

6. We confess that the mission of the church is to bear witness to God's law and gospel in our words and deeds. We are sent into the world as disciples of Christ to glorify God in every area of life and to bring all peoples into submission to the Lordship of Christ, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We seek to obey this commission in the full assurance that our Lord and Savior is with us always, even to the end of the age.

—Adopted by the Board of Directors of United Church People for Biblical Witness, Dubuque, Iowa, November 17, 1983

THEOLOGY

Evangelical Theology: Where Do We Begin?

by Thomas Finger

I) The Present Situation

In recent decades systematic theology has fallen on hard times. This is due, in part, to our general cultural situation. Not only has knowledge in fields relevant to the discipline exploded beyond the capabilities of almost any individual, but the felt religious needs of most people are for something quite different from a complex, tightly interwoven, cognitive "system". In a world increasingly shaped by massive, impersonal and intellectually sophisticated technology, most people turn to religion for something intimate, personal and emotionally satisfying. Even those whose focus is "outward", toward challenging modern structures, want guidelines for concrete action, not carefully refined dogmas.

Systematically inclined thinkers can legitimately challenge this craving for experience or action at the expense of truth. But despite the extreme forms in which they are often phrased, might such concerns contain a kernel of truth? Is not systematic theology's ultimate purpose, after all, to guide the life and mission of the Church? And, might not one plausibly urge that its concepts and structure make closer contact with the outlook of the age and of ordinary Christians than often is the case?

Traditional theological systems usually begin with complex issues of epistemology: of revelation, reason and their interrelation. Then follow God's attributes and the Trinity—surely among the most intricate intellectual issues ever discussed. Systematic Theologies then descend to Creation, where sophisticated scientific issues come to the fore. To be sure, Systematic Theology must at some point deal with these important matters. But *beginning* one's system with them carries two liabilities.

First, discussion commences at an intellectual level so lofty that all but the highly educated or intelligent are left groping at the start. Second, the concepts employed are often deeply indebted to philosophy and science. The terms and style of argumentation are often set before the data relevant to worship, fellowship, experience, ethics and mission are thoroughly explored. Such data, accordingly, may be neglected, distorted, or presented in a form undesirably disconnected from actual Christian living.[1]

Beginning, then, from the purpose of evangelical Systematic Theology itself— to guide the Church's life and mission— and not primarily from the experience and action-oriented mood of the present, we may ask whether the discipline might helpfully adopt a different style and structure. We will do so by pondering, first, the meaning of "evangelical", and second, the meaning of "systematic".

II) What is "Evangelical"?

The voluminous literature on this topic suggests three main routes to definition: theological, historical and Biblical.[2]

A) Theological Definitions of "Evangelical"

According to Kenneth Kantzer, evangelicals affirm the authority of scripture and justification by faith.[3] Evangelical theology, that is, is primarily reformation theology. Others, such as Bernard Ramm, identify it more with the specific Reformed tradition.[4]

Donald Bloesch's list of evangelical "hallmarks" contains a number of Reformed emphases such as: the sovereignty of God, total depravity, the substitutionary atonement, and the primacy of proclamation.[5] Bloesch, however, recognizes that some groups stressing these "hallmarks" have neglected other important themes and practices. Some of these have been emphasized in Catholicism.[6] Others, such as personal piety, sanctified living and social involvement, have been stressed by other Protestant groups, sometimes at times when Reformed Christians seemed to have lost them.[7]

We thoroughly agree with Bloesch and others that the authority of Scripture and God's initiating activity must characterize all theologies called "evangelical". However, by looking beyond the Reformed tradition, Bloesch points the way towards an historical definition of "evangelical", and one closer to common usage of the term.

B) Historical Definitions of "Evangelical"

Evangelicals, on this view, not only believe something, but are

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eager to communicate it and to live it out. Evangelicalism, for this approach, is marked, first, by an urgent sense of mission. Second, this mission aims at personal response to Christ. Third, this response issues in wholly transformed living. Finally, this transformed living carries a social impact.

When we contrast this historical definition with the theological, we see that the referents of each do not always coincide. Some groups holding a theology designated as "evangelical" (whether Reformed or otherwise) have exhibited few or none of the four above characteristics. Yet other groups clearly exhibiting these characteristics have had conflicting theologies, or little explicit theology at all. This is precisely the weakness of defining "evangelical" by strictly theological criteria: it risks overlooking, marginalizing or neglecting groups that have done much of the evangelizing. Yet this weakness parallels one we recently discerned in systematic theology in general: its tendency to develop its concepts and structure apart from the Church's life and mission.

To be sure, evangelical theologizing can never simply derive its doctrines from Church activity, as if doctrines were mere descriptions of what Christians feel and do. Evangelical theologizing, which views all things in light of God's initiative, must provide criteria for measuring experience and action. Yet if those criteria are conceptually disconnected from these actualities, theology will not fulfill its major task.

Serious thought about the structure of evangelical theologizing, then, must consider movements which theologians have often neglected. One is the so-called "Believers' Church" tradition, bypassed because it contains little explicit theologizing.[8] Yet historians generally agree that in Reformation times it was a "Believers' Church", the Anabaptists, who possessed the strongest sense of evangelistic mission, the strongest emphasis on discipleship, who insisted on personal conversion, and who unleashed far-reaching currents of social transformation.[9] Not much later, as Lutheran and Reformed orthodoxy slipped towards social and theological rigidity, Pietism rediscovered faith's experiential side, discipled believers in small fellowships, and sent missionaries around the globe while attacking social problems at home.[10]

While Pietists seldom broke with their State Churches, and thus were not technically "Believers' Churches", they formatively influenced movements like the Moravians and Methodists who were. Methodism became a mass movement distinguished by the four characteristics above. Yet in their polemics, Methodists were often at odds with Reformed doctrines which, they felt, sometimes inhibited the evangelistic enterprise itself.[11]

To be sure, in America, Methodist Evangelicalism intermingled with older streams from Reformed sources.[12] Yet the origins of America's Puritans and their longings for a pure Church can hardly be dissociated from the Believers' Church movement. Moreover, their early years reveal frequent tension between "Believers' Church" emphases, which moved in evangelical directions, and those conforming to the religious and social *status quo*.[13] Their history and that of later Presbyterianism [14] shows that Reformed doctrines can be understood by some to support evangelical emphases, and by others to oppose them. Meanwhile, during the 18th and 19th centuries, much of the evangelizing was carried out by Methodists, Baptists and newly emerging "Believers' Churches."[15]

But what of the relation of systematic theology to Evangelicalism before about 1900? Three points stand out:

1) Some systematic reflection, such as that of Jonathan Edwards, was both distinctly Reformed and integrally related to evangelical activities. Later, however, evangelical groups borrowed heavily from Reformed theologies formulated in other intellectual and social worlds. Especially influential was the "Princeton Theology", rooted more in an ecclesiastically and socially conservative European orthodoxy than in American Evangelicalism.[16] Moreover, Princeton's most noted system, that of Charles Hodge, was shaped in part by reigning philosophical and scientific notions. Hence one can ask how well his system and its many successors can articulate evangelical reality. One can also ask— as one must of any philosophically-influenced system— to what extent its concepts facilitate or distort expression of theology's Biblical substance.[17]

2) Many strongly evangelistic groups had little interest in theology. What theologizing they did was highly "apologetic" in character: it was motivated less by a desire to articulate their own distinctive ethos than to interact with more established theologies, and with scientific and cultural challenges. In other words, the style and structure of their systems did not derive entirely from their own agendas. One can at least ask whether the impulses foundational to Methodist, Baptist and other movements might appropriately have taken on— and even today might take on— different conceptual forms.

3) One may ponder the suitability of the conceptuality derived from the Reformation, especially as accentuated in Reformed Orthodoxy, to articulate two primary features of evangelical reality. First, it generally defined justification (something imputed, external, etc.) in sharp contrast to sanctification (imparted, internal, etc.). Yet in evangelical reality, conversion flowed directly into discipleship. Second, these theologies discussed justification and sanctification largely in individualistic terms. Yet evangelical experience normally carries a social impact. Reformation theology and its orthodox heirs, no doubt, rightly intended to emphasize the divine initiative and the necessary personal response. But might evangelical reality suggest other angles from which to approach these issues?

To summarize: our historical approach has shown that "evangelical" movements stress both content and action. Evangelicals have something definite to believe, yet also to communicate and to live out. A contemporary theology for articulating, critiquing and guiding evangelical impulses, then, could usefully work on the connecting links between belief and action, and among the different dimensions of that action. More specifically, a theology appropriate to historial evangelical reality could articulate:

1) that ultimate horizon within which not only beliefs, but the communication and living out of beliefs is urgent.

2) the intrinsic connection between justification and sanctification.

3) the intrinsic connection between personal sanctification and social involvement

C) A Biblical Definition of "Evangelical".

Since "evangelical" theology, whatever its style or structure, emphasizes the normativity of Scripture, we may most appropriately ask whether the Bible contains a term(s) or a theme(s) by which to define "evangelical".

Investigation reveals that the word *euaggelion* meets this need in several ways.[18] First, it often denotes the core of the early Christian message. This core does not include every topic important for systematic theology. But it contains the unique, foundational claims of Christian faith. It thereby provides a point of orientation from which to view later developments and to articulate their significance.

Second, though *euaggelion* involves a definite theological content, it is also a dynamic, life-changing power. "The gospel" is a group of affirmations . . . and also their transforming actuality. And this two-sidedness corresponds to that of historical Evangelicalism. We may distinguish three phases in the use of *euaggelion*: in Synoptic gospels, by the earliest Christians, and by Paul.[19]

1) In the Synoptics, the inbreaking of God's Kingdom forms the primary content of *euaggelion*. The Kingdom, of course, is not just a verbal message, but the advent of new Life. The "gospel" of the Kingdom is regularily accompanied by healing, exorcism, and new possibilities for "the poor".[20] As the advent of new Life and power, *to euaggelion* calls for repentance (Mk 1:15).

In the Synoptics, "the gospel" is also the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. The coming of God's Kingdom is therefore an eschatological occurrence. Moreover, the Kingdom's advent is intrinsically connected with that of Jesus. Thus the Synoptics occasionally indicate that Jesus— and even his death— are intrinsic to

"The gospel" is a group of affirmations . . . and also their transforming actuality.

to euaggelion.[21] However, the dawn of a whole new reality, the Kingdom of God, forms the center of the Synoptic "gospel."

2) Jesus is at the center of *to euaggelion* in the early Christian proclamation. Yet this does not mean that a transcendent object wholly replaces the eschatological irruption of new Life into history. Fulfillment of God's historical promises is as pronounced as ever. Some of "the gospel's" earliest expressions outline Jesus' ministry, crucifixion and resurrection.[22]

Among these events, his resurrection has most profoundly shaped history.[23] On one hand, it has unleashed powerful "subjective" forces. For Jesus' resurrection corresponds with the outpouring of the Spirit, who draws believers into communities of worship, fellowship, mission and economic sharing. (Note that while personal decision is foundational for it, the "subjective" dimension of early Christianity is communal, not individualistic, in character).

Yet these "subjective" effects of Jesus' resurrection are grounded in its "objective" significance. Jesus' resurrection is his appointment to Lordship over the cosmos. This includes his dominion over all principalities and powers.[24] It also involves his appointment as the coming Judge (Ro 2:16). Yet Jesus' resurrection, along with his death, has also already passed eschatological judgment on the world. This judgment, however, is a strange one. For though the death and resurrection of God's Messiah have condemned the world, to those who repent and believe they bring forgiveness of sins.

As often noticed, the *euaggelion* of the earliest Church announces and actualizes an intertwining of the "already" and the "not yet". The resurrection has already occurred, the Spirit has already been poured out, new Life and new community are already present. Yet the risen Lord is also the imminently returning Judge, and believers have been born anew to a living hope— yet a hope which places life in the "already" in an entirely different perspective.[25]

3) Finally, Paul the apostle brings out further implications of *to euaggelion.* The emphasis on promise and fulfillment finds expression as a comprehensive historical *musterion.* For Paul, what is revealed and fulfilled is God's plan, hidden for ages, to actualize obedience among all nations (Ro 16:25–26); or, more profoundly, to unite all dimensions of creation.[26] In this way Paul further explicates the historical and social reality of "the gospel", and also the imperative of preaching it to all Creation, even the heavenly Powers.[27]

Second, "the cross" takes on new dimensions. Jesus' death becomes the critique of the worldly striving for wisdom and power.[28] As "the word of the cross" , the gospel will bring persecution to those who communicate it and those who receive it.[29] The "already" of the *eschaton* co-exists paradoxically with struggle against "the world." The mission it imples will be marked by suffering.

Finally, Paul enlarges on "justification by faith". When Peter's party separated itself from Gentile Christians at Antioch, "the truth of the gospel" was threatened (Gl 2:14). As the following verses show, "justification" language was already familiar to Jewish Christians. It was therefore consistent with, the earliest Church's "gospel". However, Paul's elaborations of the conflict between "the works of the Law" and "the Promise" are better understood as his own explications— accurate explications, of course— of this aspect of "the gospel."[30]

If Paul's justification teachings are viewed from the vantage-point of *to euaggelion,* two important implications for evangelical theologizing emerge. First, justification's "legal" terminology refers primarily to God's victorious eschatological judgment and liberation of the whole creation. Its primary reference is not the individual sinner. Second, as the starting-point of his discussion in Galatians shows, living *kata erga nomou* separates not only humans from God, but humans from each other. Justification, like all aspects of "the gospel", has important social dimensions.

III) What is "Systematic"?

The content and dynamic of *to euaggelion* correspond remarkably with evangelical reality, historically ascertained. Both are grounded in a definite content which can and must be verbally articulated. Yet this content presses towards communication with an urgency and a dynamism which brings conversion, transforms lives, and impacts the whole created order.

If we now wish to articulate this "gospel" and its implications in some "systematic" order, which might be most appropriate? What conceptual structure might best inform, critique and guide the Church as it seeks (among other things) to grasp the "horizon" within which the "gospel" works, and to intertwine conversion with discipleship, and the personal with the social?

Since all systematic *loci* are interrelated with all others, nothing forbids beginning as traditional systems have: with epistemology and/or the doctrine of God. Nevertheless, commencing with issues so conceptually intricate may obscure, if not distort, the specific, concrete shape of evangelical realities. As an alternative, evangelical theologians might usefully reconsider the "Biblical Theology" movement of the 1940s and 50s. Its practitioners often insisted that Biblical writers communicated in unique categories, and that theology's business was largely to recover and restate them.[31]

But among the widely diverse Biblical writings, can any suggestions of "systematic" order be found?[32] Over 30 years ago, G. E. Wright underlined the notion of "recital". Recitals recount God's past saving acts in a way that gives meaning for the present and future. As newer acts are experienced, these are added to the recital, reshaping its significance. As time passes, more and more of the Biblical community's experience finds meaning within an overarching history of promise and fulfillment.[33]

We have seen how the Biblical *euaggelion* interprets Christ's saving acts within just such a framework. Perhaps evangelical theologizing could articulate the unique character and urgency of that "gospel", yet express its contents and their implications in an orderly way, if it were structured somewhat as a "recital". Several starting-points suggest themselves. Systematic theology might begin with Christ, and from there stretch backwards through the history that promised him and forwards to the consummation he will bring. Or theology might systematize all aspects of God's work from the central theme of the Kingdom.[34]

My own suggestion is that Systematic Theology begin with eschatology.[35] By eschatology I mean not only those events still to occur (*parousia,* final judgment, etc), but that joyous reality proclaimed in "the gospel": that the *eschaton* has "already" broken in, although it has "not yet" been consummated. In eschatology of this sort, "objective" and "subjective" dimensions are most closely intertwined. For the *eschaton* is grounded in Jesus' historical life, death, resurrection, reign and return. Yet is unleashes intense repentance, rejuvinated living and glorious hope. Phrased otherwise, with an eschatological starting-point, systematic theology can stress both the initiative of the transcendent God and experiential character of Christian existence: and both the cosmic and personal dimensions of Christian reality.

Eschatology, in other words, provides the horizon within which the urgency and dynamism of *to euaggelion* can be understood. "The gospel" is urgent because the New Age is "already" here . . . because a new way of living is now possible . . . because all creation is being renewed. However, its "not yet" character also clarifies the necessity of struggle and suffering, as expressed in Paul's "theology of the cross".

An eschatological starting-point might also help overcome dichotomies between conversion and discipleship. From this perspective, conversion must lead to discipleship because conversion is conversion to the dawning reality of a New Age. Similarily, the polarity of personal and social can be bridged. For personal decision joins one to a new community and a new creation.

If evangelical theologizing were to begin from this point, or from any point inherent to the Biblical recital, the doctrine of God might come later in the system. Of course, God would remain ontologically prior, as in all Evangelical theology. However, if God is known primarily through divine acts, theology might wish to postpone lofty intellectual discussions about divine attributes and the Trinity until the maximum data concerning these acts had been examined.

Some, of course, might shy away from Biblical Theology due to reports that it has long been "in crisis". Examination of this "crisis", however, shows that it arose largely from Biblical scholars' failure to do adequate Biblical theology, and from theologians' failure to interact with and appropriate their findings.[36] Today evangelicals are blessed with increasingly competent Biblical scholars and with theologians who know Scripture better than most others. The time is ripe for them together to pick up and reconsider the still chal-

lenging issues left unsettled by this movement.

One such issue, however, calls for specific comment. Biblical Theology frequently puzzled over how the distinctive categories it emphasized could make contact with today's personal and social issues. To speak to contemporary problems, isn't it better to appeal to apparently universal notions: say, "to conscience, human dignity, and the natural rights of self-expression . . ."?[37]

Today a movement with significant affinities to Biblical Theology, known as Narrative Theology, suggests some points of connection. Narrative theologians insist that for Christianity, reality is intrinsically structured by the narrative histories it tells. There is no way of knowing, expressing or accepting Christian claims without understanding how reality has been shaped by these stories.

Numerous features of Christian existence, then, can be understood as interactions among narratives. Each individual, for instance, has a history. We move toward personal identity through understanding and creatively appropriating our own pasts. Conversion, then, can be said to occur when one's personal narrative "collides" with the Christian narrative: when one allows one's personal story to be illuminated and judged by the Biblical one, and find its meaning-context in the latter.[38]

Consequently, as in evangelical reality, conversion leads intrinsically to discipleship. For conversion is insertion into a new universe of meaning; and discipleship involves continuing re-interpretation of one's own story in light of it. Moreover, that new context, by definition, cannot be individualistic in character. For it is the story of God's dealings with the world. Personal conversion and discipleship, then, have social dimensions.[39]

Narrative theologians, of course, sometimes have problems. For some, the Biblical "story" is ambiguously related to history.[40] But if "story" is merely a structure of subjective human development, then "the gospel" looses its rooting in the Divine initiative, contrary to all Evangelical Theology.

Yet many Narrative theologians do root the Biblical story in history. Narrative Theology, therefore, can suggest links, first, between Scripture and pastoral psychology. For growth towards personal wholeness involves re-shaping by the Biblical story. Second, Narrative Theology suggests links between the Bible and contemporary ethics. For, as Stanley Hauerwas insists, ethics has to do not merely with general rules, but with the formation of character. And character-formation is guided by the narratives of a normative tradition.[41]

Finally, Narrative Theology suggests ways of relating Scripture to modern social problems. For conflicts among social groups often arise from the dissimilarities among their collective stories. And oppressed peoples often have no real story, or only a brutalizing one. In a pluralistic world, conflicts among cultures often may not be best approached by appeals to notions and values which supposedly are held in common. Rather, it might be best to let each group discover and tell its own story. Then the Biblical story might be told; for it can illuminate, critque and create points of contact among those stories.

IV) CONCLUSION

Narrative Theology suggests one way in which the Biblical message, the norm of theology in evangelical perspective, can concretely inform, critique and guide the Church today. Like the notion of "recital" in Biblical theology, it envisions the Scriptures and modern life as caught up in God's overarching history with humanity. Evangelical theologians can usefully consider these movements, for Evangelicalism is essentially dynamic and historical in character. Its "gospel" is largely a proclamation of past events whose power surges towards actualization. It creates mission, converts individuals, transforms them in Christian community and impacts the whole of theological society. If theological doctrines are to facilitate this process, they must be stated and systematized in a way that can be clearly interconnected with it.

[1] This concern is not merely a modern one, but was classically expressed in the Reformation's first attempt at Systematic Theology:

> We do better to adore the mysteries of the Deity than to investigate them. . . . The Lord God Almighty clothes his Son with flesh that he might draw us from contemplating his own majesty to a consideration of the flesh, and especially our own weaknesses. . . . Therefore, there is no reason why we should labor so much on those exalted topics such as 'God', 'the Unity and Trinity of God', 'The Mystery of Creation', and 'The Manner of the Incarnation.' What, I ask you, did the Scholastics accomplish during the many ages they were examining only these points? . . . But as for one who is ignorant of the other fundamentals, namely, 'The Power of Sin', 'The Law', and 'Grace', I do not see how I can call him a Christian. For from these things Christ is known, since to know Christ means to know his benefits, and not as *they* teach, to reflect upon his natures and the modes of his incarnation (Philip Melanchthon, *Loci Communes* in Wilhelm Pauck, *ed., Melanchthon and Bucer* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969], pp. 21–22.)

[2] Our purpose is not to present "Evangelical theology" as a normative ideal type. Our aim is to determine (very roughly) to what historical movements the name "evangelical" might most usefully apply, and what sort of Biblical starting-points might best suit theologizing in these traditions. "Evangelical theology/ies", then, would be a descriptive term for theologies done in these traditions. Since, as we shall see, such theologies point beyond their own traditions to Scripture as their critical norm, they should resist elevating themselves to the status of ideal types. The ideal towards which such theology should aim would not be an "Evangelical theology", but "theology in evangelical perspective" (that is, theologizing from the vantage-point of a tradition, but always clarifying and critiqueing that tradition by Scripture). On the dangers of using "Evangelical" as an ideal type, see Vernard Eller's criticism of Donald Bloesch ("'Evangelical': Integral to Christian Identity?" *TSF Bulletin*, Vol. 7, No. 2 [Nov–Dec, 1983], pp. 5–10).

[3] "Unity and Diversity in Evangelical Faith" in Wells and Woodbridge *eds., The Evangelicals* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), pp. 38–67.

[4] This is particularly prominent in *The Evangelical Heritage*, (Waco, Tx: Word), 1973. Probably the most extreme example of this is John Gerstner, who can call evangelist Charles Finney "the greatest of nineteenth century foes of evangelicalism" (in Wells and Woodbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 27).

[5] Donald Bloesch, *The Evangelical Renaissance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) pp. 48–79. Bloesch also lists the Divine authority of Scripture, salvation by grace, faith alone, Scriptural holiness, the Church's spiritual mission, and the personal return of Christ. For a similar list, see *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, Vol. II [New York: Harper, 1978], pp. 235–259).

[6] *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, Vol II, pp. 278–290.

[7] For Bloesch's greater appreciation of Pietism and related movements, which Ramm seldom mentions, and for his frequent critiques of Protestant Orthodoxy, which Ramm evaluates highly, see *The Evangelical Renaissance*, pp. 101–157, and *The Future of Evangelical Christianity* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), pp. 14–22. For Ramm, see *The Evangelical Heritage*, pp. 49–70.

[8] We are not identifying "evangelical" with "Believers' Church", but proposing that they are similar and frequently overlapping historical types. See James Garrett, *ed., The Concept of the Believers' Church* (Scottdale, Pa: Herald, 1969). Against criticisms that Believers' Churches are based on human choice rather than on divine initiative, this volume insists in numerous ways that "the Word of God creates, judges and restores the church" (p. 319; cf. pp. 27–28, 60, 201, 218, 225, 258, 316). On this issue, see also Donald Durnbaugh, *The Believers' Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 6, 31–33.

[9] See Robert Friedmann, *Theology of Anabaptism* (Scottdale, Pa: Herald, 1973) and Walter Klaassen, *ed., Anabaptism in Outline* (Kitchener, Ont: 1981). More than some other Believers' Churches, Anabaptists place more emphasis on Jesus' normativity for ethics and on the Church community (e.g., John H. Yoder in Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 258: "The work of God is the calling of a people. . . . The church then is not simply the *bearer* of the message of reconciliation. . . . Nor is the church simply the *result* of a message. . . . That men are called together to a new social wholeness is itself the work of God. . . ."). Regarding "Evangelicalism" largely as a twentieth century North American phenomenon, Norman Kraus insists that it is often at odds with Anabaptism (see Norman Kraus, *ed., Evangelicalism and Anabaptism* [Scottdale, Pa: Herald, 1979], pp. 1–22, 169–182). Ronald Sider, on the other hand, finds authentic Evangelicalism similar to Anabaptism (pp. 149–168).

[10] Dale Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

[11] E.g., Wesley's criticism of predestination (see Thomas Langford, *Practical Divinity* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1983], pp. 34–35.) Much of Wesley's theology, like many of his successors, focused on maintaining the Reformation emphasis on Justification while supplementing and intertwining it with a greater emphasis on Sanctification (pp. 20–48).

[12] For a view which traces Evangelicalism largely from Puritainism and regards "the rise of Wesleyan Arminianism. . . as an almost immanent development," see Sydney Ahlstrom in Wells and Woodbridge *op. cit.*, pp. 269–289.

[13] Between missionary impulses and concentration on those already within the covenant; between intensive and relatively minimal personal preparation for saving grace; between efforts towards regenerate Church membership and the "half-way covenant"; and between efforts to make the Church independent of the State and efforts to subordinate her to it. (see Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, Vol. I [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975], pp. 200–236)

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 329–345, 551–570.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 388–402, 504–550

[16] Ahlstrom shows briefly how this school was allied with forces cautious towards (though not entirely opposed to) revivalism. See also Mark Noll, *ed., The Princeton Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), esp. pp. 13–40, 114–116.

[17] Hodge insisted that his theology followed an inductive method, which he regarded as standard in the sciences. (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. I [London: James Clarke, 1871] pp. 1–17). At the same time, such a method relied heavily on *a priori* rational principles, as taught by Scottish common-sense philosophy (cf. Noll, pp. 61–70). In fact, Hodge often argues deductively from these principles. Some important doctrines can be deduced largely from them with little help from the accompanying Scriptural passages. (e.g., consider the logical structure of the arguments on pp. 195–199, 233–240, 367–368, 413–424, 535–543).

[18] Attempts to define "Evangelicalism" almost always mention *euaggelion*, but very seldom investigate it in any depth (e.g. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, Vol I., p. 7: *The Future of Evangelical Christianity*, pp. 15–16).

[19] Our investigations below take both *euaggelion* and the related verb *euaggelizomai* into account. A thorough study (which would substantially confirm our results) would fully investigate other forms of *aggello/aggelia*, and also *kerussein/kerugma, akoe, hrema, matureo/marturia*, and *logos* (cf Peter Stuhlmacher, in the volume *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien* [Tuebingen: Mohr, 1983], pp. 24–25).

Evangelical theologizing . . . must provide criteria for measuring experience and action.

[20] Mk 1:15: Mt 4:23. 9:35. Luke uses the verb rather than the noun to indicate the same message (4:18, 43, 7:22; 8:1; 9:6; 16:16; 20:1). Robert Guelich concludes that the literary genre "gospel", materially speaking, "consists of the message that God was at work in Jesus' life, death and resurrection, effecting his promises found in Scripture." This work of God is "the establishment of *shalom*, wholeness, the reestablishment of broken relationships between himself and his own, the defeat of evil, the forgiveness of sins and the vindication of the poor" (in Stuhlmacher,*op. cit.*, p. 217).

[21] Mk 8:33 and 10:29 parallel *to euaggelion* and Jesus. Mk 14:9 (par Mt 26:13) connects the gospel with his death.

[22] Acts 10:36–43 with 15:7, 13:26–31. According to C.H. Dodd, the earliest "kerygma" began, much like Jesus' proclamation, by asserting that God's promises were now fulfilled. It ended, again like Jesus' message, with a call to repentance and faith. In between, the "kerygma" briefly recited Jesus' life, death, resurrection, present lordship and return— all which occurred according to God's plan, foretold in the Old Testament. In Dodd's view, these events correspond to the central element in Jesus' proclamation: the coming of God's Kingdom.
Although our present, brief reconstruction of the early Church's "gospel" focuses on passages where *euaggelion* or *euaggelizomai* occur, Dodd's "kerygma" corresponds closely to it. In a thorough study (cf note [19] above), the findings of each would interpenetrate and confirm each other. Passages central both to Dodd and to our present study are Ac 10:36–43, 13:17–41; I Co 15:1–7; Ro 1:1–3, 2:16. Other passages central for Dodd are Acts 2:14–39, 3:13–26, 4:10–12, 5:30–32; I Th 1:10; Gl 1:3–4, 3:1; Ro 8:34, 10:8–9. (*The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* [New York: Harper, 1964], pp. 7–35 and appended chart).

[23] Esp. Ro 1:4, I Pt 1:3, Ac 13:34–37, II Ti 1:8; though Jesus' death and resurrection are given equal weight in I Co 15:3–4, the rest of the chapter focuses on the resurrection. Because *euaggelion* involves not only content but power, we also stress its "subjective" effects as indicated from accounts of the early Christian communities' activities (Ac 2:43–47, 4:32–37, I Th 1:2–10, etc.).

[24] Though Dodd acknowledges this (p. 15), Oscar Cullmann emphasizes it much more fully in *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (London: Lutterworth, 1949). These confessions provide another means of penetrating to the emphases of the earliest Christian "gospel".

[25] I Th 2:14; Cl 1:5, 23; Ep 1:13–14;; I Pt 1:3–8, 12.

[26] Ep 1:9–10, 3:3–11, 6:19; Cl 1:25–27.

[27] Ep 3:7–10. Thus when Paul speaks of the "gospel", he is frequently discussing his missionary commission (I Co 9:12–18; II Co 10:13–16, 11:7–9; Gl 1:6–2:10; Ro 15:15–21; Ph 1:5–7, etc.).

[28] I Co 1:17–2:6; Gl 3:1, 4:13.

[29] I Th 1:5–7; 2:2, 14–15; Ep 6:15; and throughout II Corinthians. This was already evident in the earliest evangelizing (Ac 5:42) and in Jesus' synoptic sayings (Mk 13:10, Lk 16:16).

[30] My view may differ slightly from Stuhlmacher's, who asserts that "Paul's gospel of Christ is essentially the gospel of Justification!" (*op. cit.*, p. 24). However, Stuhlmacher finds the origin of Paul's gospel in his encounter with the risen Jesus. Since this Jesus was the same one who died accursed by the Law, the encounter convinced Paul that it was not Jesus who was really discredited, but the Law as a way of salvation. Thus from the beginning Paul's gospel involved a critique of justification by works of the Law (pp. 164–167). Even for Stuhlmacher, however, the foundation Paul's gospel is not a general message about justification, but the risen, enthroned Jesus. Justification is an *implication* of his resurrection. Even here the resurrection as God's cosmic act of condemnation and liberation is the foundation of justification.

[31] Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), esp pp. 44–50. By "unique" we do not mean that Biblical themes have nothing in common with those of other religions and philosophies; but that even a consideration of common elements often serves to highlight the distinctiveness of the former.

[32] By "systematic" we mean simply an orderly, comprehensive, coherent account, employing a consistent methodology and terminology throughout.

[33] G.E. Wright *God Who Acts*, (London: SCM, 1952), pp. 33–58.

[34] Evangelicals have shied away from the Kingdom because of its centrality in Liberal Theology. But the Liberal kingdom was an immanent one. The Biblical notion intertwines immanent and transcendent dimensions.

[35] See Thomas Finger, *Systematic Theology: an Eschatological Approach*, 2 vols. (to be published by Thomas H. Nelson, 1985). Moltmann points in this direction when he says "The eschatological is not one element *of* Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day." (*Theology of Hope* [New York: Harper, 1967], p. 16.) Vernard Eller makes similar suggestions in *Towering Babble* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press), pp. 65–76 and in the dialogue with Donald Bloesch *op. cit.* (note [2] above).

[36] See Childs, pp. 51–87. A major issue, for example, was that of revelation. What was revealed: historical events? Biblical interpretations of these events? Some combination of the two? (p. 52). This and other issues are still being refined and discussed by evangelical scholars. For another claim that Biblical Theology is not dead, see James Smart, *The Past, Present and Future of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979).

[37] Childs, p. 85.

[38] George Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), pp. 170–175.

[39] Ibid., pp. 228–233. Appropriation of the Biblical narratives as the context for one's own narrative cannot be a passive or merely intellectual act (though receptivity and intellectual appropriation are necessary elements). It means to live— to continue one's narrative history— in a certain way. Conversion (or confession) is real only when it is the first step of a new way of living (pp. 186–212).

[40] For a discussion of the issues, see Stroup, pp. 89–95: and Michael Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), esp pp. 194–240.

[41] See esp. *Character and the Christian Life* (San Antonio: Trinity, 1975) and *Truthfulness and Tragedy* (Notre Dame, In: Notre Dame, 1977).

Is *Sojourners* Marxist? An Analysis of Recent Charges

by Boyd Reese

In the past couple of years, figures from both the Evangelical Establishment and the secular New Right have charged that Marxism characterizes the *Sojourners* outlook. This article will analyze and rebut those charges; more broadly, it will propose other contexts for understanding *Sojourners*. I start with introductory comments, examine evangelical criticisms, discuss the intellectual background and political perspective of *Sojourners*, and finally deal with criticisms from the secular New Right.

Some preliminary comments about the perspective from which this article is written are in order. This analysis will form part of a doctoral dissertation focusing on *Sojourners* written for the Department of Religion at Temple University. I was one of the students at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School who was involved in events leading up to the founding of *Sojourners'* predecessors, *The Post-American*, and served as associate editor of the magazine from 1971 through 1974. I thus claim an insider's knowledge of the development of the political and theological perspective of the magazine in its early days. Almost all of this analysis, however, will rely on material that is available for public scrutiny in the pages of the magazine and in the secondary literature. While I continue in basic sympathy with *Sojourners'* stance, I do not presume to speak for the magazine; the editors may disagree with elements of my analysis.

Charges from the Evangelical Establishment[1]

Both Harold Lindsell and Ronald Nash have charged in recent books on evangelicals, economics, and ethics that *Sojourners* is characterized by a Marxist analysis and prescription for society. In his *Social Justice and the Christian Church* (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1983), Nash cites a statement of Jim Wallis as evidence that he is "one evangelical who can hardly restrain his enthusiasm for Marxism" (p. 158). There is a great deal of irony when one recognizes that the major thrust of the article Nash refers to is a warning to Christians against marrying themselves to any ideological system, and particularly a plea to Latin American liberation theologians to learn from the alliance of North American evangelicalism with capitalism and not tie themselves to Marxism. When Wallis says that it is predictable that some Young Evangelicals will "come to view the world through Marxist eyes," Nash understands this to be desirable from Wallis' point of view, when in fact Wallis attributes this to lack of sophistication on the part of those evangelicals who turn to Marxism! (cf. "Liberation and Conformity," *Sojourners* September 1976, p. 4).

Sojourners has made use of elements of analysis from some Marxist thinkers in its socio-political analysis, but it is not accurate to say its analysis is Marxist, or even heavily influenced by Marxism. Ironically, *Sojourners'* use of Marxism exactly parallels Nash's. In his discussion of Herbert Marcuse, Nash says, "No evangelical has to reject every aspect of Marcuse's diagnosis. Portions of it are easily serviceable in a Christian diagnosis of the spiritual ills of a materialistic society whose every conscious moment is spent in the pursuit and the consumption of things" (p. 99). Nash also discusses Marx's four forms of alienation and says, "The evidence does suggest that all the forms of alienation noted by Marx exist under capitalism"— and immediately adds that they are found in socialist societies as well. He goes on to say that Marx ignored a fifth form of alienation, that from God caused by sin (pp. 135–137). Where *Sojourners* has appropriated elements of analysis from Marxist thinkers (and from other social scientists as well), they have proceeded as Nash does, selectively and with modifications from their reading of the Scriptures.

In *Free Enterprise: A Judeo-Christian Defense* (Tyndale House, 1982), Harold Lindsell charges that *Sojourners* has a thin veneer of Christian rhetoric overlying a basic commitment to Marxism (pp. 30–31). Lindsell quotes from a June 1980 editorial of Jim Wallis that speaks of the present as a period of major social disintegration. Lindsell's quote ends with Wallis' statement, ". . .a system has power only to the extent that people believe in it. When people no longer believe the system is ultimate and permanent, the hope of change

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