



Evangelism in Current Ferment and Discussion: A Bibliographical Survey

JAMES A. BERGQUIST

Division for Service and Mission in America, The American Lutheran Church,
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Evangelism and mission have been at the center of theological discussion in recent years, thus placing mission properly at the center of the church's reflection and life. This observation holds true whether one examines the literature of Roman Catholicism (especially Latin American), that of the Protestant ecumenical movement, or, especially, that of the Evangelicals. The book that I would most like to have reviewed has not yet (to my knowledge) been written. What seems badly needed is a solid descriptive study of the history of evangelism, tracing its biblical and theological foundations, showing how mission belongs to the essence of the church, and then describing, analyzing, and evaluating in historical and theological perspectives the diverse and partially conflicting contemporary approaches.

It is the purpose of this article to survey some of the current literature on evangelism, ordering the bibliographical material in ways that hopefully will indicate key trends and issues.

I. EVANGELISM AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

A. *The Place of Evangelism and Mission*

Perhaps the most important development in current theology of mission is the widespread recognition of the essential missionary character of the church. That recognition came to be articulated by those involved in world missions. "There is no participation in Christ without participation in his mission to the world," declared the Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1952. The burning issues of the 1980s directly involve the question of how the church can receive, understand, and articulate its faith in a broken world. Mission and evangelism, understood as the outreach of Christians to the world, cannot be viewed as a sideshow or as an optional activity. Bishop Lesslie Newbigin's *The Open Secret* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) stands as one of the very best current theologies of mission. With clear insight and biblical fidelity Newbigin roots mission in the activity of the Triune God. The first half of the book provides a clear discussion of theological foundations. The last half of the book

discusses four key contemporary issues of mission: Christian particularism and world history, justice and liberation, church growth, and the gospel and religions. The book is enormously significant for the total mission of the church, not just its "overseas" aspects. Carl E. Braaten's *The Flaming Center* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) must be listed as a second key book which gives intelligent expression to the "two fold task of theology"—the inquiry concerning the nature

of the gospel and the nature of the church's mission.

The significance of both books is that they place evangelism and mission squarely within the central concern of the theological enterprise as a whole, not allowing it to function as a branch of "practical theology" (as many seminary curricula have had it) or as a "special committee" of the life of a congregation. Both books therefore represent a growing ecumenical consensus about the place of mission and evangelism, a viewpoint shared in the reaffirmation of the missionary nature of the church in the document of Vatican II, "Constitution on the Church," which began with these words: "Christ is the light of the nations."

Several other writings reinforce the same perspective. Two books by the Latin American evangelical theologian, Orlando E. Costas, provide a holistic understanding of evangelism and an interpretation of the church as God's instrument of mission to the world: *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1974) and *The Integrity of Mission: The Inner Life and Outreach of the Church* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979). An important earlier work by Hans J. Margul, *Hope in Action: The Church's Task in the World* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962), remains a basic theological study of evangelism, arising out of the WCC discussions between 1939 and 1960 when such "giants in the land" of evangelism as Hendrick Kraemer and D. T. Niles walked the earth and helped disclose the links between evangelism, Kingdom, and God's gracious work: "Evangelism can be nothing but simple, loyal, patient, obedient participation in the consummation of the plan which God has for the world and which he effects himself...Missions are always God's missions." Two books by Jürgen Moltmann (among other of his writings) give emphasis to the theological realization that the true church, alive in terms of the cross and its radical hope, is real only in mission; these are *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) and *The Passion for Life: A Messianic Life-Style* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978). Ralph Quere has worked out a theology of mission on the basis of the Lutheran distinction between law and gospel in his *Evangelical Witness* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975). Isacc C. Rottenburg's *The Promise and the Presence: Toward a Theology of the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) gives further emphasis to the relationship between Christology, eschatology, and the mission of the church. Finally, two books from Roman Catholic sources express something of the dynamic theology of church and mission since Vatican II. Jose Comblin, a Belgian priest who has worked in Latin America for more than two decades, deals in a clear fashion with the centrality of mission for the whole church in his *The Meaning of Mission: Jesus, Christians and the Wayfaring Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1977). Avery Dulles, S.J., provides a helpful analysis of five central images of the church, with the apostolic character implicit in all images, in his *Models of the Church: A Critical Assessment of the Church in All its Aspects* (New York: Doubleday, 1974).

B. Definitions of "Evangelism" and "Mission"

In this article so far "mission" and "evangelism" have been used as interchangeable terms. Each word is notoriously difficult to define, partly because neither is a biblical word as such and each has acquired meanings which have changed somewhat in the course of their usage over the past 150 years.

Within the Bible there are verbal but not nominative forms of "mission" and

“evangelism.” “Mission” is derived from the Latin verb “*mittere*” (and the noun “*missio*”—a sending), a verb which translates one of several Greek verbs “to send” (chiefly *pepo* and *apostello*). The idea of sending occurs in connection with the church’s vocation in the New Testament, particularly in the Gospel of John (cf. 17:18 and 20:21), but also in such key “mission” passages as Luke 10:1; Mark 6:7; Acts 26:17; and Romans 10:15. Similarly the verb “to evangelize” is found about 70 times in the New Testament, along with about a similar number of appearances of the noun “gospel” (*euaggelion*) and three instances of the noun “evangelist,” but the noun “evangelism” does not occur.

Historically, the nouns “mission” and “evangelism” do not seem to have been used in the church until the 16th and 19th centuries respectively. Then each acquired a quite particular and precise definition. “Mission” was generally used in the plural to indicate enterprises of the church carried out elsewhere than at home, while “evangelism” came to have a narrower meaning related to the revival movements in American history.

In contemporary Christian usage each term has been broadened in meaning. Something of a consensus may have developed within the ecumenical world today with regard to “mission” in the singular as the total activity of the church for the world. This broad meaning is reflected, for example, within the structures of The American Lutheran Church which applies the word “mission” to its divisions for global, home, and congregational activities. Some persons, however, such as Stephen Neill and Lesslie Newbigin, would prefer to limit the use of the word “mission” to the outreach of the church, as opposed to its renewal ministries. Newbigin, for example, insists that missionary work differs from other activities of the church inasmuch as it is concerned with crossing the frontier between faith in Christ as Lord and unbelief—a definition which makes mission nearly identical with evangelism (*One Body, One Gospel, One World: The Christian Mission Today* [New York: International Missionary Council, 1959] 29). “Evangelism” as a term too has been broadened from its association with revival to apply to the outward-flowing stream of the church’s life as a whole (conversion and justice), but it is still limited to outreach ministry. The Evanston Assembly of the WCC in 1954 defined evangelism as “the mission of the church to those outside her life.” The definition of these terms, and the relationship between them, has in fact become the center of on-going debate, as may be noted in the following sections of this survey.

It seems easier to state what evangelism is not than what it actually is: It is not revival. It is not just church extension. It is not simply presence or action for justice without the Word. It is not an individualistic, specialized activity, nor is it propaganda for civil religion. But there are positive definitions which help order the diverse meanings.

The article by Paul Loffler, “The Confessing Community: Evangelism in

Ecumenical Perspective,” *International Review of Mission* 66 (1977) 339-48, provides a helpful analysis from an ecumenical perspective. Two books by contemporary Evangelical authors also provide useful definitions. David Watson, in his *I Believe in Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), in addition to a series of excellent word studies on “evangelism,” “gospel,” “proclamation,” and other key words, provides what I believe to be the best general introduction to evangelism available. There is much here for the local pastor and congregation. John R. W. Stott deals with the interrelationship of five key terms (mission, evangelism, dialogue, salvation,

and conversion) in his *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1975). All three of the references cited would appear to accept Loffler's conclusions: "When referring to its theological meaning, 'evangelism' is practically identical to 'mission.' When referring to evangelistic witness, 'evangelism' more specifically means 'the communication of Christ to those who do not consider themselves Christians' (Bucharest statement). Thus, evangelism is sufficiently distinct and yet not separate from mission....[Ecumenical study has] thereby helped to overcome a narrow concept of evangelistic witness while preserving its specific character" (*IRM* 66 [1977] 341).

C. *Histories of Mission and Evangelism*

Apart from several well-known histories of the church which make mission and expansion a central focus (particularly those of Stephen Neill and Kenneth Scott Latourette), there does not appear to be any comprehensive history of evangelism as such. The English Evangelical, Michael Green, provides a valuable study of the first centuries in his *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), a book which achieves a sound, theologically-oriented survey in the light of recent biblical and patristic studies on the order of the still invaluable work of Adolph von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (New York: Harper, 1971). A more recent book by Green, *First Things Last* (Nashville: Tidings, 1979), carries the story forward as the title of the British edition, *Evangelism—Now and Then*, makes more clear. While not specifically on evangelism, Michael Collins Reilly, S.J., has given a provocatively important historical survey on the piety and motive of evangelism under the title *Spirituality for Mission: Historical, Theological, and Cultural Factors for a Present Day Missionary Spirituality* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978). Analyzing the spirituality of missionary movements from the early Roman Catholic Orders through the Protestant Pietists to Foucauld and Hudson Taylor, Reilly argues with informed insight that because the context of mission has changed, diverse and changing forms of evangelical spirituality are required. The historical perspectives provided are invaluable.

D. *Three Key Documents on Evangelism*

Finally, in rounding off this survey of writings which give emphasis to outreach as belonging to the essence of the church, reference should be made to three important contemporary documents. The dynamic reassessment of evangelism in the Roman Catholic Church following Vatican II is reflected in the document of Pope Paul II, *Evangelii Nuntiandi: Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World* (Washington: Catholic Episcopal Conference, 1976). Positive shifts toward a reemphasis on the questions of identity and proclamation

within the ecumenical movement are indicated in the appropriate sections on evangelism in *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975* (ed. David N. Paton; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), the official report of the latest WCC Assembly. From the evangelical side, key documents may be found in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland* (ed. J. D. Douglas; Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975). An important interpretation of the Lausanne documents is provided by John R. W. Stott, *The Lausanne*

Covenant: An Exposition and Commentary (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975).

II. MOVEMENTS AND COUNTER-MOVEMENTS.

My first attempt to interpret the literature on evangelism today was to survey writings that placed evangelism and mission at the center of the church and its theology. I now attempt a second approach, that of analyzing evangelism in terms of its historical development in North America. Two general works are of special importance for this task. First, *The Conciliar-Evangelical Debate: The Crucial Documents, 1964-1976* (ed. Donald McGavran; South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1977) contains a useful series of key writings on both sides of issues concerning evangelism under debate during the years indicated. The selections tend to “tilt” toward the Evangelical side, though a fair hearing is generally given to each key issue, and the whole presents the most accessible survey of developments in evangelism during these decades, so far as I am aware. The other important reference has been edited by Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky, C.S.P., *Mission Trends No.2: Evangelization* (New York: Paulist, and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975). The twenty-two essays in this volume provide an informative, representative, and occasionally outstanding series of historical and theological insights.

The theology and practice of evangelism has undergone several abrupt shifts in North America in this century. Developments may be viewed as a series of movements and counter-movements. I can only suggest major lines of development and risk over-simplification in attempting to define four “epochs” in contemporary thinking about evangelism.

A. *From “Revival” to “Discipline”*

Evangelism in North America in its definition and method was shaped by the revival tradition. Beginning with the First and Second Great Awakenings of the 18th and 19th centuries when mass revival emerged in rural America, to the urbanization of mass revival methods under Billy Sunday, Dwight L. Moody, and others, to its urban (and global) manifestation with Billy Graham and others, evangelism had come to be associated in popular consciousness almost exclusively with this single tradition, and in a peculiarly individualistic and socially conservative form in recent years. Perhaps the best single evaluation of the impact of the revival method remains Franklin H. Littell’s *From State Church to Pluralism* (New York: Doubleday, 1962). His central thesis is that the United States from the time of its independence must be understood as the territory of missionary “younger churches” whose task was to evangelize a nation in which Christians were statistically small. He argues that while the revival churches (the free church tradition) made voluntarism a permanent part of religion in this country, classi-

cal Christian discipline was lost, even while revivalism progressed, opening the way to declining standards of membership and civil religion. One result was the failure of Protestant Christianity to deal with the two great cultural crises of the 19th and 20th centuries in America, racial injustice and the rise of the city (he calls Protestant work in the inner city “sensationally inadequate”). Littell thus calls for a return to classical Christian identity, for “a trial of strength between nativism and evangelical faith.” Littell’s study anticipates the major crisis of evangelism today—the inability of a revival method to revive, when there is no Christian memory to revive

within vast sectors of pluralistic America, and the inability of an undisciplined “religion-in-general” to provide either the message or the motive for an evangelism able to cross contemporary frontiers between belief and unbelief. Littell discusses Lutherans only briefly, terming them “late bloomers.” One hopes this assessment bears fruit in the future. On the whole, Lutherans have been more reactive than proactive in the discussion about evangelism’s message and task for our times.

B. *From Civil Religion to Kerygmatic Faithfulness*

Littell wrote in the midst of a second well-defined period in evangelism marked by enormous movement and counter-movement, the period between 1945 and 1965. This period can be characterized as a time of rapid growth in church membership, but also as an era of sharp sociological and kerygmatic criticism of evangelism as nothing more than pragmatic and competitive “church extension.” Post-war growth in church membership, on its sociological side, capitalized on the mobility and rootlessness of America. Authentic mission did go on, but the “come structures” of the churches appeared to a rising and vocal band of socio-theological critics, among them Littell himself, to have substituted civil religion for kerygmatic identity. Hence the counter-movement, with roots in the then-current biblical theology, exploded in the works of Martin Marty, Gibson Winter, Will Herberg, Peter Berger, Gerhard Lenski, Langdon Gilkey, and others. LaVern K. Grosc surveyed some of this literature in his article “New Forms for the Church: Christendom’s Morphological Malaise,” *dialog* 4 (1965) 12-20. There is continuing value in rereading the books of these kerygmatic critics. Nothing with quite the same theological and analytical depth has emerged recently to define as forcefully the battlelines for authentic evangelical witness.

C. *From the Anonymous Prophet to Mission with Integrity*

A third “epoch” in the understanding of evangelism began in the mid-1960s and is to be associated with the response of the churches to the great social issues that in the end destroyed the optimism of post-war America: the racial struggle; Vietnam; the realization that the gap between the rich and the poor on the globe was growing larger, not smaller; environmental destruction; and entrenched patterns of economic and political injustice. If the kerygmatic theologians of the early 1960s had called for a return to biblical faithfulness, the form of that faithfulness during the late 1960s and early 1970s seemed to demand radical identification with the world as the form of evangelism. Hence the key words: “The world sets the agenda;” “The church for others;” “The struggle for justice;” “Silent presence as the form of witness.” Two books by Colin W. Williams, then executive director

of the Central Department of Evangelism of the NCC, represent the call to secular witness: *Where in the World? Changing Forms of the Church’s Witness* (New York: NCC, 1963) and *What in the World?* (New York: NCC, 1964), as well as the two studies of the WCC’s Western European Working Group and North American Working Group, *The Church for Others and the Church for the World* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1967). Writings by the Indian theologian M. M. Thomas and other third world theologians similarly called for radical obedience within the world-wide struggle for justice as the authentic form of evangelical witness

for the day, though M. M. Thomas himself always rooted such witness in the given Word. See in particular his important book, *Salvation and Humanization* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1971).

The counter-movement to the trend to reduce evangelism to a horizontal “humanization” erupted almost immediately from among some Lutherans and especially the Evangelicals. It was felt that the ecumenical movement had betrayed traditional themes of evangelism—conversion, growth and reconciliation—and had under-emphasized or submerged both the authority of the Word and the reality of God’s gracious and unique redemption in Christ. Numerous selections in McGavran’s *The Conciliar-Evangelical Debate* (cited above) document this reaction. The term “polarization” came to be used to describe the resulting situation—polarity between conciliar and Evangelical churches, between justice and reconciliation, between service and proclamation.

However actual the polarization was, and for however long it lasted, it is clear that today the debate between those who view evangelism primarily as God’s action for justice and those who see it primarily in terms of personal conversion has diminished from what Lesslie Newbigin called “the level of mutually destructive polemics.” It has diminished because each side has been able, out of its own tradition, to hear the truth of what the other is saying. Evangelism is seen in terms of its essential biblical integrity as both proclamation and service, and as God’s action both for conversion and justice.

More holistic forms of evangelism are urged by various Evangelical authors. David Moberg, in his *The Great Reversal: Evangelism vs. Social Concern* (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1979), charges that Evangelicals have in fact been unfaithful to their own early traditions in adopting an individualistic stance, while being blind to structural and social sin. The same point is made by Jim Wallis in his *Agenda for Biblical People* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), as well as by others in the pages of *Sojourners*, a journal of the neo-evangelicals. Still others who reinforce this perspective include C. Rene Padilla, a Latin American Evangelical, in *The New Face of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1976), Richard Quebedeaux in *The Worldly Evangelicals* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), William J. Richardson in *Social Action vs. Evangelism* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1977), and the Australian Alan Walker in *The New Evangelism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975).

Three excellent books from authors identified with the conciliar movement call for a reaffirmation of biblical identity in mission, a “naming of the Name:” Walter Hollenweger, *Evangelism Today—Good News or Bone of Contention* (Belfast: Christian Journals, 1976), Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches are Growing: A Study of the Sociology of Religion* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, rev ed., 1977), and Jan M. Lockman, *Reconciliation and Liberation* (Belfast: Christian Journals,

1979). The article by James A. Bergquist makes a similar plea, which is entitled “The Search for Integrity in Mission,” in *The Church Emerging* (ed. John Reumann; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 187-251.

Polarization on the question of the nature of evangelism does continue, however, not so much on the official level between churches as it does on the levels of popular understanding within the churches. Two conservative authors claim to speak for large segments of the “grass roots” in continuing an attack on a form of evangelism which gives place to an orientation

toward justice: Harvey T. Hoekstra, *The World Council of Churches and the Demise of Evangelism* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1979) and Arthur Johnston, *The Battle for World Evangelism* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1978). There is some evidence on the sociological level that the battle on the grass roots may not have ended as neatly as most theologians would hope it might be. See, for example, Jeffrey K. Hadden's *The Gathering Storm in the Churches* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1969). His research documents a growing criticism by laity of those clergy who take activist stands on social issues. Moreover, he contends that this criticism is rooted more in the assumptions of "civil religion" than in biblical confessionalism. Polarization remains a reality within denominations if not characteristic of differences between them today.

All of which brings us back to Franklin H. Littell and the socio-theological critics of the early 1960s who call for reaffirmation of kerygmatic identity as the authentic stance for mission in America, and who decry the shallow and ineffective platitudes of a culturally-captive religion-in-general.

III. CURRENT ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENT

While it may be difficult to predict with any accuracy along what lines evangelism will move in the future in North America, there are at least five areas of development to be noted.

A. Recovery of Evangelism Among "Mainline" Denominations

There is a noticeable resurgence of emphasis upon traditional forms of outreach evangelism among "mainline" Protestants, an evangelism which appears to be continuing to stress social action and life-style evangelism, but which also stresses telling the "Story." Five authors may be chosen as representatives.

Gabriel Fackre, a United Church of Christ pastor and professor of evangelism at Andover Newton, has produced three excellent and readable books: *Do and Tell: Engagement Evangelism in the 70s* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973); *Word in Deed: Theological Themes in Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); and *The Christian Story* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978). He is also the author of an earlier book, *Second Fronts in Metropolitan Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968).

George Hunter, formerly a professor of evangelism at Perkins School of Theology and currently the coordinator of evangelism for the United Methodist Church's Board of Discipleship, has written what has been reviewed as the best book on congregational evangelism, *The Contagious Congregation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978).

Alfred C. Krass, a former missionary, then for several years an evangelism consultant for the United Church of Christ, and now editor of *The Other Side*,

gives us a truly outstanding piece of biblical reflection on contemporary evangelism in *Five Lanterns at Sundown: Evangelism in a Chastened Mood* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978). His subtheme addresses the cultural context of America in a way that refuses to tilt toward triumphalism in mission. Krass writes in his Preface:

Why do I describe this as evangelism in a chastened mood? An author must work within a given cultural context. The context in which American evangelism has

developed and which it has helped shape—and which has marked my work until recently—has been that of evolutionary optimism, theological Arminianism, and pragmatic activism. I must speak to that context.

To an American audience which expects to see evangelism associated with growth and visions of the New Jerusalem, the biblical evangelist must address the question: Have you really caught the drift of the biblical message? Have you appreciated how counter-cultural it is? Or have you reshaped it to conform to the millennialism of your culture?

Krass has earlier written a study of evangelism out of his Africa experience, well worth the effort to acquire and read: *Go...and Make Disciples: TEF Study Guide 9* (London: S.P.C.K., 1974).

George E. Sweazey's *The Church as Evangelist: Making Evangelism a Priority of Local Congregations* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978) is a theologically sensitive and practical guidebook to congregational evangelism.

Robert C. Worley, like George C. Sweazey, a Presbyterian, deals with the need for congregations to take pluralism seriously both inside their lives and in their movement into society, in *A Gathering of Strangers* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978).

The quality of the books just cited certainly does not support the cynical comment of a *Christianity Today* writer that the resurgence of an emphasis on traditional outreach among mainline Protestants is due primarily to the sting of falling membership figures.

Three books by Lutheran authors may also be viewed as a part of a renewed focus on evangelical outreach: Gerhard Knutson, *Ministry to Inactives* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979), Rolf A. Syrdal, *Go, Make Disciples* (Minneapolis: Augsburg 1977); and Walter Wietzke, *Believers Incorporated* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977).

B. Concentration Upon Cross-Cultural Ministry

Ralph D. Winter's article, "The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism," in *Mission Trends No. 2 Evangelization* (pp. 109-122), provides a helpful typology of four types of evangelism, a typology now widely utilized for analytical purposes. While his major concern is to demonstrate the need for continuing cross-cultural mission overseas, his analogy is meaningful for understanding the American situation. He speaks of E-0, E-1, E-2, and E-3 modes of evangelism. E-0 (the "E" in each case indicating "evangelism") is to proclaim the good news within an existing community of baptized Christians; here evangelism is the renewal or revival of practicing or lapsed believers. E-1 indicates evangelical outreach among persons of the same linguistic, ethnic, or cultural background, proclamation along the lines of particularity: alikes evangelizing alikes. E-2 is evangelical outreach toward cognate but distinct cultures: from one linguistic or

ethnic group to "cousins"—e.g., Norwegians evangelizing persons of similar but distinct North Atlantic backgrounds. E-3 evangelical outreach, according to Winter, is fully cross-cultural mission across linguistic, ethnic, and cultural lines.

Winter argues that the majority of the world's non-Christians stand in cross-cultural relationship to existing Christian communities; hence the need for continued cross-cultural

ministry. The same typology could be applied to the pluralism of North America—if cultural barriers are thought of in terms of racial or ethnic origins (Black, Hispanic, Native American, other ethnics), or in terms of economics (the poor), or culture (inner city). If this typology is followed, the majority of America’s 80 million non-churched persons may be seen to stand in a crossing-cultural relationship to the predominantly white and middle-class mainline Protestant churches. And, if this is the case, then forms of evangelism which concentrate upon renewal (E-0) will reach only those already baptized, while E-1 and E-2 forms of evangelism will only reach those who are already like us or nearly like us (whether urban Black is evangelizing urban Black, or middle-class suburban White is evangelizing other suburban middle-class persons). Thus, to follow the implications of Winter’s typology, specific and intentional strategies of evangelism will be needed to undertake mission within American’s pluralistic mosaic. To put the point another way, the American scene may be viewed as much a cross-cultural mission “field” as Tanzania or Papua New Guinea would be for an American expatriate missionary.

How then ought America’s churches respond to this situation? There is widespread agreement on two points: (1) The areas of greatest need in mission remain the areas of greatest frustration and failure for nearly all mainline and Roman Catholic churches (what Littell terms Protestantism’s “sensationally inadequate” ministry in the city). (2) Responsible evangelism in the 1980s needs to develop a new approach to the domestic cross-cultural situations.

But it is at the point of appropriate evangelical strategies that the literature on evangelism divides sharply. One clear line, deeply influenced by the McGavran school of Church Growth, suggests that proper strategy is to evangelize along the lines of particularity, founding or developing congregations along ethnic, racial, and linguistic lines, the “homogeneous units” of a society, because (according to McGavran’s dictum born out of India experience) people prefer to become Christians without crossing cultural barriers. The Church Growth school is not insensitive to the new human community created in Christ; it insists, using the analogy of “Black is beautiful,” that the deepest and most real unity is achieved when each particularity is respected and its integrity acknowledged. But a second clear line of response to cultural pluralism objects strongly to the “homogeneous unit” approach, declaring that such an approach denies the reality of a new community in Christ without barriers.

This brief sketch of the Church Growth debate has missed nearly all of the nuances of the discussion (as well as other important aspects of the Church Growth movement), while highlighting the central theological issue. A large literature has developed on both sides.

For an understanding of the Church Growth school the following books are minimally essential. Three key books are by Donald A. McGavran: *Bridges of God* (New York: Friendship, 1955), and *How Churches Grow* (New York: Friendship, 1959), and *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969). It is also

useful to be familiar with the *Church Growth Bulletin* published by the Institute of Church Growth at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, available also in consolidated volumes through the William Carey Library. Two associates of McGavran have made important contributions. Alan R. Tippett brings missionary experience and training in anthropology to bear in *Church Growth and the Word of God* (1970) and *God, Man, and Church Growth* (1973), both published in Grand Rapids by Eerdmans. A younger colleague and also veteran missionary, C.

Peter Wagner, has undertaken the task of applying Church Growth “principles” to the North American scene. See especially Wagner’s *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy* (Chicago: Moody, 1972); *Your Church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church* (Glendale: Regal, 1976); and *Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979). The latter is the most extensive application of the Church Growth methods to the American scene and a book that needs to be wrestled with if for no other reason than that the congregational patterns of most American denominations resemble in fact, if not in intention, the particularistic approach recommended by Wagner.

For the best reasoned and informed critique of the Church Growth movement, see the volume edited by Wilbert R. Shenk, *The Challenge of Church Growth: A Symposium* (Institute of Mennonite Studies, Missionary Studies No.1; Scottdale: Herald, 1973). The contributions by Shenk and by John. Howard Yoder are invaluable. Harvie Conn has edited another evaluation of the movement, *Theological Perspectives on Church Growth* (Nutley: Presbyterian, 1976). Two additional critiques are incorporated in books cited previously: Chapters 6 and 7 of Orlando E. Costas, *The Church and its Mission*, and Chapter 9 of Lesslie Newbigin’s, *The Open Secret*. Thomas F. Stransky, in his article “Mission in the 1980s” in *The Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 3 (1979) 46-47, predicts that the Church Growth movement will be taken more seriously by all churches, Protestant and Roman Catholic, with a reexamination of its theological presuppositions. Certainly the movement represents the most sustained piece of missiological reflection in our time, and represents a clear challenge to the churches to place evangelism as proclamation, conversion, and growth at the center of their lives.

C. *The Continued Importance of Liberation Motifs*

The large and growing literature on the “internationalization of mission” indicates that the American churches will continue to think out the meaning of evangelism in North America in terms of global injustice, oppression, and poverty amid the over-affluence of the world’s minority. Three books may be cited (among dozens): Robert McAfee Brown, *Theology in a New Key* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), in which he traces in his unique style how liberation themes had been increasingly forced upon him in recent years (“I do not think that there are any issues on the theological or human scene more important than the ones liberation theologians are raising,” p. 11); José Míguez Bonino, *Room to Be People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980); and L. David Brown, *Take Care: A Guide to Responsible Living* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978).

D. *The Growing Importance of Roman Catholic Reflection Upon Evangelism*

Roman Catholics call it “evangelization” not “evangelism”—in an effort to neutralize the inherited and narrowly-defined definition of evangelism as re-

vival. The level of Roman Catholic theological reflection upon mission is biblically and theologically impressive, though some current Roman Catholic work tends to be moralistic, more heavily rooted in nature than in grace, and at times appears an overreaction to earlier institutional and triumphalistic forms of Roman Catholic witness. Orbis and Paulist Presses, like Eerdmans among the Protestants, continue to encourage and publish the best on mission. A half-dozen examples can be cited. David Bohr’s *Evangelization in America* (New York: Paulist, 1977)

examines the biblical, theological, and ethical backgrounds of evangelism by Catholics in America. John Eagleson and Philip Scharper have edited *Puebla and Beyond* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979), which includes a look at the “base church” movement among Catholics—a positive analysis of which is given from the Protestant side by Charles M. Olson, *The Base Church* (Atlanta: Forum House, 1973). Bernard Häring combines an emphasis upon liberation and reconciliation in his *Evangelization Today* (Notre Dame: Fides, 1974). Johannes Hofinger seeks to keep mission and nurture together in the spirit of Vatican II in his *Evangelization and Catechesis* (New York: Paulist, 1976). William K. McElvaney addresses the North American situation in his *Good News is Bad News is Good News: Relevant Theology for the U.S.A.* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1980). Finally, Juan Luis Segundo discusses the task of the church in the world in Chapters 3 and 4 of his book, *Our Idea of God* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973).

E. *Confrontation of the “New Religions”*

Whether the new religions are here to stay or are passing phenomena, it is clear that in some ways they speak a word of challenge to traditional churches in their failure to expose the radical message of the gospel to their young. All new religions are not the same. Cultic movements involving phony scientism and Eastern gurus may be downright demonic. Johannes Aagaard, a Danish missiologist, believes the cults from the East represent a new and extensive agnosticism, a large and growing phenomenon requiring a new and vigorous Christian apologetic.

The “Jesus People,” in distinction from new religions from the East, may represent movements that ought not be finally alienated from the church and its tradition, but which might sustain relationships of mutual enrichment. At least this is the plea of the authors of the two following books: Erling Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion: The Jesus Revival in America* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), and Ronald M. Enroth, Edward E. Ericson Jr., C. Breckinridge Peters, *The Jesus People: Old Time Religion in an Age of Aquarius* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972).

One last entry is a book that gives insight into the understanding of mission and evangelism in the Orthodox tradition, a form of “presence” and community witness: *Martyria and Mission* (ed. Ion Bria; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980).