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**Book Reviews**
Nairobi 1975: a crisis of faith for the WCC

Bruce Nicholls

Mr Nicholls, an associate editor of Themelios, attended the Fifth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches as an observer. As International Co-ordinator of the Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship, he is in a good position to assess the significance of the Assembly for theology and mission throughout the world, and as a long-standing resident in India he is particularly sensitive to its likely impact on the Church in the Third World. What follows is a personal, not an official, view.

This is one man’s report of a very complex happening, written by one who was a first-timer at such an ecumenical gathering, like 70%, of those attending Nairobi. The sheer pluralism of the WCC and its attempt to address itself to a wide range of global problems, political, economic, social and religious, in the space of eighteen crowded days, makes a balanced and fair report exceedingly difficult. Time for re-study of all the documents and reflection is needed.

The diversity of people attending Nairobi was impressive. 604 delegates from 286 churches together with advisers, delegates observers, observers from international organisations, press, staff and visitors altogether totalled more than 2,300. Almost half the delegates were from the Third World. Ninety-six came from the eastern European churches 20%, with men and women and youth —higher percentages than in the previous Assemblies.

Nairobi was an attempt at a consensus of traditions in which a Bible was found for everybody’s views, including those of the observer. With the growing influences of the eastern European churches and the diversity of Third World churches, including those of doubtful Christian orthodoxy, the issue of whether the consensus of time, energy and finance on such a large gathering is justified specifically when the consensus process offers so little clarity in its message to the churches. Perhaps the future lies in smaller gatherings organized on a more focused and clearly defined and limited goals and a stronger measure of fundamental agreement among the participants.

The assembly and use of Scripture

The Assembly was projected as a celebration, a participation in the praxis of Jesus Christ freeing and uniting. The experience-centred approach of the New Testament was a model for Nairobi. The small group Bible studies that emphasized participation in worship of many traditions and the brilliant use of drama, dance, films and the daily wall newspaper all contributed to make Nairobi an experience in unity and liberation. The one-page message of the Assembly to the world, An Invitation to Prayer, was a summary of what the Assembly had experienced. The need for a new prayer to the Reconciling Creator to help us conserve the earth’s resources for future generations, to the God of love to help sustain world community, and to the God of hope to struggle against injustice. But there was no reference to the authority of Scripture or to the proclamation of the gospel to the lost.

The Assembly was also an attempt at finding authority in the consensus of Christian traditions. The assumption was made that the New Testament is the record of the traditions of the early church and that these have been supplemented and enriched by the traditions of succeeding generations. The Moderator, M. M. Thomas, offered a synthesis of eccumenical, orthodox, catholic and evangelical traditions, especially in the area of evangelism and mission. Yet, the orthodox delegations were intransigent in their insistence on the primacy of the traditions of the first six centuries as the only basis for eucharistic unity. In a somewhat triumphal spirit Dr Philip Potter spoke of the ecumenical tradition as embracing the whole oikoumenê with only the Roman Catholic Church to be gathered in. He made no reference to the values of different ecclesiastical traditions who stand outside the ecumenical movement, or to those regions of the world, such as Latin America, where only a very small minority of the churches of the region belong to the WCC.

All such international conferences raise the fundamental issue of whether the expenditure of time, energy and finance on such a large gathering offers so little clarity in its message to the churches. Perhaps the future lies in smaller gatherings organized on a more focused and clearly defined and limited goals and a stronger measure of fundamental agreement among the participants.

The relevance of the biblical message to the modern world. The Bristol meeting of the Faith and Order Commission in 1967 further questioned the unity of Scripture and interpreted the Bible as a variety of traditions and insights which must be examined, each in its own cultural setting. There was no agreement on whether the Bible was normative, or a product of the traditions of the early church, or only one element in the complexity of Christian truth. The Uppsala Assembly reflected the same uncertainty. A study report was presented to the Faith and Order Commission at Louvain in 1971, in which the content of the faith was further questioned. The inspiration of the Bible was held to be its inspiring character. The report asks, ‘Why should not Basil, Augustine, Thomas, Luther, or some modern author be inspired too? Surely it was their work of interpretation that led to the Bible speaking again with fresh authority?’

This loss of the authority of Scripture as normative produced a hermeneutical crisis. The New Delhi approach to hermeneutics as ‘map-reading’, by which the acts of God in biblical history provide a clue to understanding the present world, was gradually replaced by a situation hermeneutic in which the meaning of the text is the controlling factor. The cultural life situation determines the use made of the Bible and imposes its own unity on it. At Nairobi the new hermeneutic was evident in numerous ways. The passages selected for the theme of the study, “Jesus Christ Frees and Unites” were chosen to illustrate the theme of human liberation, and the perspectives of the biblical writers adapted to this ‘relational centre’. It was a reversal of historic evangelical hermeneutics.

The new hermeneutic was applied in an imaginative way in the parable of the prodigal son presented by the United Bible Societies. The dynamic equivalent principle of translation was not only interpreted of the parable, but the meaning was made “he fell on his neck”, but also to the basic goal of the parable. The presentation suggested that the younger son was right to break with his father and try his own way. But what this older son was right to stand up to his father and that the parable is an open-ended story to show how the father can keep both sons. While these insights reflect accurately the tensions in modern family life, they cannot be a valid exegesis of the passage can support them.

The cultural context rather than the biblical message dominated the addresses of all the plenary sessions with the exception of Bishop Aria’s paper
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This is one man's report of a very complex happening, written by one who was a first-timer at such an ecumenical gathering, being 20% of those attending Nairobi. The sheer pluralism of the WCC and its attempt to address itself to a wide range of global problems, political, economic, social and religious, in the space of eighteen crowded days, makes a balanced and fair report exceedingly difficult. Time for re-study of all the documents and reflection is needed.

The diversity of people attending Nairobi was impressive. 604 delegates from 286 churches together with advisers, delegates, observers, observers from international organizations, press, staff and visitors together totalled more than 2,300. Almost half the delegates were from the Third World. Nineteen per cent came from the eastern European churches, 20% from women and 10% youth—higher percentages than in the previous Assemblies.

Nairobi was an attempt at a consensus of traditions in which a Bible was found for everybody's views, including those of the observer. With the growing influences of the eastern European churches and the diversity of Third World churches, including those of doubtful Christian orthodoxy, it was a struggle to find a clear consensus, but the experiment in fundamental agreement is breaking down. Obviously it might appear that the goal of the ecumenical movement in the visible and sacramental unity of the churches is being slowly achieved, but in reality a true unity of faith is being lost.

The assembly as a whole was 70% women and 10% youth—a higher proportion than in the previous Assemblies. The assembly was an attempt at a consensus of traditions in which a Bible was found for everybody's views, including those of the observer. With the growing influences of the eastern European churches and the diversity of Third World churches, including those of doubtful Christian orthodoxy, it was a struggle to find a clear consensus, but the experiment in fundamental agreement is breaking down. Obviously it might appear that the goal of the ecumenical movement in the visible and sacramental unity of the churches is being slowly achieved, but in reality a true unity of faith is being lost.

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The very structure of such a mammoth Assembly makes genuine democratic proceedings almost impossible. The gap between the obvious goals that the Secretariat had set for the Assembly and the concerns of the participants was noticeable. The reasonably strong evangelical participation received little visibility either in the plenary sessions or in the leadership of the sectional groups. John Stott's eight-minute reply on evangelism was the one clear exception! The fundamental unity and clear but limited goals of the equally large Lusanne Congress stood out in sharp contrast to Nairobi.

The WCC faces an identity crisis. The Assembly was ambivalent in its attitude on how far the WCC exists to reflect the concerns of the member churches and how far it exists in its own right as a prophetic voice leading the churches to a fresh understanding of their mission. The trend towards theological radicalism and liberal politics in the Secretariat was evident in the choice of plenary speakers, but among the participants, particularly those from Europe, there was a decided conservative reaction and a desire to give a much stronger emphasis to ecumenism than the organizers of the Assembly had originally planned. Only the future will tell how responsive the Secretariat is to this concern of the member churches.

All such international conferences raise the fundamental issues of whether the expenditure of time, energy and finance on such a large gathering is justified especially when the consensus process offers so little clarity in its message to the churches. Perhaps the future lies in smaller gatherings organized on a more specific interest basis that is defined and limited goals and a stronger measure of fundamental agreement among the participants.

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The Assembly was also an attempt to find authority in the consensus of Christian traditions. The assumption was made that the New Testament is the record of the traditions of the early church and that these have been supplemented and enriched by the traditions of succeeding generations of Christians. The Moderator, M. M. Thomas, offered a synthesis of ecumenical, orthodox, catholic and evangelical traditions, especially in the area of evangelism and mission. Yet, the orthodox delegations were intransigent in their insistence on the primacy of the traditions of the first six centuries as the only basis for eucharistic unity. In a somewhat triumphal spirit Dr Philip Porter spoke of the ecumenical tradition as embracing the whole oikoumenē with only the Roman Catholic Church to be gathered in. He made no reference to the various interpretations within these traditions of the eucharist. The WCC concluded that the eucharist should stand outside the ecumenical movement, or to those regions of the world, such as Latin America, where only a very small minority of the churches of the region belong to the WCC. The dominating aspects of the Assembly was the minimal emphasis given in the papers and reports to the Scriptures as the authoritative Word of God. The crisis of faith in the WCC is clearly one of authority. The history of the assembly provides a clear shift in its attitude to and use of the Bible. The founders of the WCC believed the Bible was normative for their message to the world and the unity of the Body of Christ. The biblical-theology school, dominated by Barth, had been deeply influenced early in the WCC's development. A rise in the early ecumenical thinking, reached a high-water mark at the new Delhi Assembly in 1961, where the phrase 'according to the Scriptures' was added to the sixteenth century definition of the older WCC. The givenness of the Bible as a testimony to salvation history and its uniqueness were stressed. Bible study had a central place in the New Delhi Assembly's programme.

The fourth session of the Faith and Order Commission at Montreal in 1963 proved a watershed in WCC thinking about Scripture. Käsemann denied the unity of New Testament ecclesiology and raised the hermeneutical problem of the

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The new hermeneutic was applied in an imagina-
tive way in the parable of the prodigal son presented by the United Bible Societies. The dynamic-equivalent principle of translation was not only used, but supplemented by the phrase 'he fell on his neck', but also to the basic goal of the parable. The presentation suggested that the younger son was right to break with his father in the parable, but the older son was right to stand up to his father and that the parable is an open-ended story to show how the father can keep both sons. While these insights reflect accurately the tensions in modern family life, it cannot be said that any valid exegesis of the passage can support them.

The cultural context rather than the biblical message dominated the addresses of all the plenary sessions with the exception of Bishop Arias' paper
on Evangelism. In the opening position paper by M. M. Thomas, the Moderator of the Assembly and Chairman of the Central Committee of the WCC, I noted the text of Scripture, in what was a theological and well-documented review of the issues before the Assembly. Again the report of Philip Potter, the General Secretary, and Robert McAfee Brown's address, 'When Churches, Peoples and Nations 'Unite', began with scriptural exposition but soon left it to deal with issues of social, economic and political oppression. None of the women speakers in 'Women in a Changing World', nor Prime Minister Manley in his address 'From the Shackles of Domination and Oppression', nor Professor Charles Birch in his address 'Creation, Technology and Human Survival' made more than a passing reference to the text of Scripture. Many of these authors quoted profusely from the authors and UN documents, but remained silent on the Word of God.

The use of Scripture in the sectional reports varied considerably. Section I, 'Confessing Christ Today', gave serious attention to Scripture, while others, particularly Section IV, 'Education for Liberation and Community', and Section V, 'Structures of Injustice and Struggles for Liberation', had little to say about it. Similarly, it was disturbing that no attempt was made to deal with biblical principles or with passages of Scripture that had given rise to conflicting interpretations in any of the social issues debated, such as the question of what constitutes the 'one church'. In Nairobi, the section on 'What Unify Requires', expanded the theme of conciliar fellowship as an aspect of life of the one undivided church functioning at different levels. It is an 'inter-church' unity of churches separated by space, culture or time.

The Orthodox emphasis on a Christ-centred dimension to the church is welcome as an alternative to a secularized Christianity which reduces the doctrine of the church to a basically classless society with humanistic goals. On the other hand the Orthodox insensitivity to the eucharist makes unity impossible. Although the Orthodox churches participated more fully in Nairobi than in Uppsala, with the election of Metropolitan Nikodem of Leningrad as one of the six Vice-Presidents of the WCC, the general disinclination of the Orthodox churches with the prevailing secular mood of the WCC may mean that the Orthodox church can only unite with the church of Rome. It was significant that the protests against the secularized policies of the WCC, whether in plenary or in sectional sessions, came from either the Anglicans or from Orthodox participants. With the exception of the using of ecumenical Protestant, we may yet see ecumenical, biblical Roman Catholics and Orthodox believers standing together in defence of the biblical faith. The failure of Rome and Constantinople to achieve an agreement in the WCC Assembly, Pope Paul wrote 'May the assurance of our fraternal solidarity be a support to you in the coming years', but he gave no indication that the Roman Catholic Church would join the WCC in the foreseeable future. Many observers doubt that Rome will ever do so. At Nairobi the eucharist was celebrated separately by the Orthodox and by the Protestant churches. At the one attempt at a unified eucharistic celebration the Orthodox were present but did not receive the elements.

The Uppsala concept that the unity of the church is a sign of the unity of mankind was endorsed by Philip Potter when he said, 'There was a whole before our minds the fact that the ecumenical movement is concerned with the oikoumené, the whole human race, as it struggles to discover what it means to be the people of God.' In his address, 'Visible Unity as Conciliar Fellowship', Dr John Deschner argued that visible unity has to do with classism, racism, sexism and the segregation of the handicapped as much as it has to do with the church as a whole. He and other speakers argued that this unity in the church is only the forerunner of the unity of mankind. Dr Robert McAfee Brown of California noted that Jesus Christ divides as well as unites, but even here he was thinking more of the division between the oppressed and the oppressor. Brown asserted that Jesus is only provisionally the divider, for in the end he will unite the whole human family. This universalistic hope had no ecclesiastical content. There was no distinction between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of God to come when the King returns. The Assembly was badly silent on the themes of the wrath of God and the final judgment and heaven and hell.

This emphasis on a secular eschatology meant that the leadership of the Assembly, impatient with any concept of gradual reform, was open to the idea of violence in order to bring about radical change in society. The models of the church-state alliances in eastern Europe and Africa were well. It was evident that many Third World leaders, and Africans in particular, were looking to governments to support their programmes for the unification of the church and for achievement of social goals. I fear we are seeing the beginning of a return to a Constantinian era in which the church is in danger of losing its prophetic role against corruption in national politics and of becoming a partner in the restriction of human rights and personal freedom to propagate the Christian faith. We may see increasing persecution against religious minorities. The vigorous defence by the Russian delegates of their own government's churches' concept of human freedom, and their rejection of a letter on the Assembly by two dissident Orthodox members appealing against the ill-treatment of religious prisoners in psychiatric clinics and nursing homes, was a warning to all at Nairobi. In the post-Nairobi era powerful church groups may seek political support for the enforcement of policies of moral conformity and the restriction of evangelism by evangelical groups. At the same time political rule will use the churches as a tool in the interests of national unity.

The New Testament teaches that unity is always unity in faithfulness to the apostolic witness. It warns against the spirit that obscures and denounces false doctrines. As Dr Klaus Kutsch has noted, when we speak of the 'true church' we must also speak of the 'false church'. This the WCC refuses to do. Their over-emphasis on 'the sin of division' makes it difficult for them to speak against heresy. Fifteen new churches, all but one belonging to the Third World, were admitted to either full or associate membership of the WCC during the Assembly. In accepting them there was little emphasis given to orthodoxy in belief as a necessary factor in membership. African independent and splinter churches are applying for membership; will the WCC be able to reject those with syncretistic and heretical beliefs and practices?

The priority of evangelism

Since the merger of the International Missionary Council with the WCC at New Delhi, evangelism has not had the prominence that it once enjoyed. Dr McVargan, 'has betrayed the two billion who do not yet know the gospel.' At Bangkok, programmes for dialogue with other religious faiths and politically motivated projects replaced the historic role of the WCC as the authorised witness of the church. In the original plan for Nairobi, no provision was made for a section on world mission and evangelization; however, the impact of the Lusaka Congress on the WCC member churches meant that this traditional concern could not be ignored.

Despite the fact that Philip Potter had told the synod of Roman Catholic bishops in Rome in 1975 that the role of the World Council of Churches has been to support a 'ecumenical theme par excellence,' he made no reference to evangelism in his general report to the Nairobi Assembly. He did speak of renewal and renewal of faith but this was in the context of the struggle for a shared life in community and for a just society. The plenary session on evangelism, however, was one of the highlights of the Assembly. Bishop Mortimer Arias of the Methodist Church in Bolivia presented a paper, 'That the World May Believe', reminded the Assembly of the intention to "stay together", which was the basis of the World Council, is secondary to the indispensable task of the Church of the
on Evangelism. In the opening position paper by M. M. Thomas, the Moderator of the Assembly and Chairman of the Central Committee of the WCC, I am well aware that the criticism of Scripture, in what was a theological and well-documented review of the issues before the Assembly. Again the report of Philip Potter, the General Secretary, and Robert McAfee Brown's address, "What is the Church of God and Unions?", began with scriptural exposition but soon left it to deal with issues of social, economic and political oppression. None of the women speakers in "Women in a Changing World", nor Prime Minister Manley in his address 'From the Shackles of Domination and Oppression', nor Professor Charles Birch in his address 'Creation, Technology and Human Survival' made more than a passing reference to the text of Scripture. Many of these authors quoted profusely from human authors and UN documents, but remained silent on the Word of God. The use of Scripture in the sectional reports varied considerably. Section I, 'Confessing Christ Today', gave serious attention to Scripture while others, particularly Section IV, 'Education for Liberation and Community' and Section V, 'Structures of Injustice and Struggles for Liberation', had only a perfunctory reference. Similarly, it was disturbing that no attempt was made to deal with biblical principles or with passages of Scripture that had given rise to conflicting interpretations in any of the social issues debated such as the Indian and the widening gap between rich and poor. It was evident that some speakers owed more to the theories of Karl Marx than to the Bible. I enjoyed the eight Bible study group sessions as times of sharing personal experiences. The Bible study group was the only attempt at exegesis of the passage, in our case Romans 8. No reports on these groups were asked for in the plenary sessions.

The Assembly seemed to be one of the crisis of faith in the WCC is a crisis of authority. Any attempt to find a consensus of Scripture, tradition and experience will end in confusion. The subjectivism of the current approach to hermeneutics only worsens the crisis. The failure of the Bible study group to address the study of the Bible to the study of the Bible in a political and social issues only accentuated the impression that Nairobi was a shadow United Nations, and as someone rather unkindly added a 'third-rate one with few political experts'.

The unity of the church and the unity of mankind

A passionate call for visible unity has always been central to the ecumenical movement. Since Uppsala a new dimension has been added. The unity of the church is a sign of the unity of mankind. This expanded concern was given considerable attention at Nairobi.

New Delhi described God's will for unity in terms of one fully committed fellowship of all God's people in each place, in all places and in all ages. Uppsala emphasized that the search for unity must not be for diversity in unity and continuity. The idea of conciliar fellowship was fostered by the French and Order Commission at Louvain. At Salamanca, Spain, in 1973, it was stated, 'The one church is to be envisaged as a conciliar fellowship of local churches which view themselves truly united in this conciliar fellowship, as local churches possess in communion with others the fulness of catholicity, witness to the same apostolic faith and therefore recognize the others as belonging to the same church and as guides for the same Spirit.' At Nairobi the section report, 'What Unions Require', expanded the theme of conciliar fellowship as an aspect of life of the one undivided church functioning at different levels. It is an 'interchurch unity' of churches separated by space, culture or time.

The Orthodox emphasis on a Christ-centred dimension to the church is welcome as an alternative to a secularized Christianity which reduces the doctrine of the church to a modified classless society with humanistic goals. On the other hand the Orthodox intransigence on the eucharist makes unity impossible. Although the Orthodox churches participated more fully in Nairobi than in Uppsala, with the election of Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad as one of the six Vice-Presidents of the WCC, the general disenchantedment of the Orthodox churches with the prevailing secular mood of the WCC may mean that the Orthodox church will find a new affinity with the church of Rome. It was significant that the protests against the secularized policies of the WCC, whether in plenary or in sectional sessions, came either from Anglicans or from Orthodox participants. With the common concern among ecumenical Protestants, we may yet see ecumenical, biblical Roman Catholics and Orthodox believers standing together in defence of the biblical faith. The future of Rome and the Assembly, Pope Paul wrote 'May the assurance of our fraternal solidarity be a support to you in the coming years', but he gave no indication that the Roman Catholic Church would join the WCC in the foreseeable future. Many observers doubt that Rome will ever do so. At Nairobi the eucharist was celebrated separately by the Orthodox and by the Protestant churches. At the one attempt at a united eucharistic celebration the Orthodox were present but did not receive the elements.

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This emphasis on a secular eschatology meant that the leadership of the Assembly, impatient with any concept of gradual reform, was open to the idea of violence in order to bring about radical change in society. The models of the church-state alliances in eastern Europe, the extensive evidence presented was evident that many Third World leaders, and Africans in particular, were looking to governments to support their programmes for the unification of the church and for the enforcement of social goals. I fear we are seeing the beginning of a return to the Constantinian era in which the church is in danger of losing its prophetic role against corruption in national politics and of becoming a partner in the restriction of the liberty and freedom to propagate the Christian faith. We may see increasing persecution against religious minorities. The vigorous defence by the Russian delegates of their own government's and church's concept of human freedom, and the rejection of an appeal to the letter to the Assembly by two disinterested Orthodox members appealing against the ill-treatment of religious prisoners in psychiatric clinics and nursing homes, was a warning to all at Nairobi. In the post-Nairobi era powerful church groups may seek political support for the enforcement of policies of moral and repressive or political correctness. As Dr Klea Runia has noted, when we speak of the 'true church' we must also speak of the 'false church'. This the WCC refuses to do. Their over-against 'the sin of division' makes it difficult for them to speak against the sinners. Fifteen new churches, all but one belonging to the Third World, were admitted to either full or associate membership of the WCC during the Assembly. In accepting them there was little emphasis given to orthodoxy in belief as a necessary factor in membership. African independent and splinter churches are applying for membership; will the WCC be able to reject those with syncretist and heretical beliefs and practices?

The priority of evangelism

Since the merger of the International Missionary Council with the WCC at New Delhi, evangelism has not been at the forefront of the Bible study group. Dr McGavran, 'has betrayed the two billion who do not yet know the gospel.' At Bangkok, programmes for dialogue with other religious faiths and politically motivated projects replaced the historic emphasis on mission and the spiritual dimension of the church. In the original planning for Nairobi, no provision was made for a section on world mission and evangelization; however, the impact of the Lausanne Congress on the WCC member churches meant that this traditional concern could not be ignored.

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evangelization of the world'. He referred to the 2,700 million who do not know Christ and live under global ideological or religious systems. He rightly stressed that the one medium for the communication of the gospel was the Christian and the Christian community.

John Stott's long-awaited reply was received with considerable enthusiasm by the Assembly. But it was disappointing that the planned plenary debate on the theme was to be cancelled as the allotted time for the session had expired. There was widespread reaction against an emotive and vindictive reporting of Stott's address in the Assembly newspaper Target. After acknowledging the positive contribution of the('*', 1937).*' and a sympathetic reference to the twenty-seven theses of the document *Evangelism in Latin America*, Stott questioned whether the Bishop's address was typical of recent ecumenical utterances. He noted, 'It seems to many of us that the Church has now been largely eclipsed by the quest for social and political liberation.'

Stott made five affirmations of what the World Council needed to recover. He called for a recognition of the lostness of man and the judgment of God, confidence in the one revealed gospel, conviction concerning our stewardship to proclaim the uniqueness of Christ, a sense of urgency about the priority of evangelism, and a personal experience of the power of all that God has accomplished in Christ. He said, 'I sometimes wonder if the greatest of all hindrances to evangelism today is not the poverty of our own spiritual experience. True evangelism is the spontaneous overflow of a heart full of Christ.'

The report of the section 'Confessing Christ Today' was undoubtedly the best statement of the Assembly. It affirmed the Church's evangelistic responsibility and called upon the churches to confess Christ in public witness and in their teaching and preaching. It stressed the contrast of conversion and discipleship and deplored cheap conversions without ethical consequences. It declared, 'We regret that some reduce liberation from sin and evil to social and political action and that they do not recognize that others limit liberation to the private and eternal dimension.' The report spoke with sensitivity on the many economic, political and ecclesiastical structures that obscure the confession of Christ and the Church's message of salvation and de-humanizing. It emphasized both personal and communal confession of Christ, the importance of worship and a Christ-centred life-style. At least a third of the participants in the Assembly asked to be assigned to this section, indicating a widespread desire for a spiritual emphasis in the Assembly. It

is hoped that this report will have an effective influence on the member churches and we hope the WCC Secretariat will press the many practical recommendations of the report upon the churches. With their own comprehensive programme and shrinking income the WCC faces a crisis in the priorities of its programme.

On the negative side some of the theological assumptions embedded in the presentation and discussion were disturbing. At times Bishop Arias slipped into an incipient universalism. He described his experience of an integrated evangelistic programme of proclamation and action among atheistic Bolivian tin-miners struggling to meet the alternatives of either work or move. All that was missing was the naming of the Name and we had to recognize that perhaps these people had more of Christ in them than we who spoke in his name. He said, 'We echo Jesus' and asked, 'How can we apply this experience of our Lord who said, 'To evangelize is to help men to discover the Christ hidden in them and revealed in the gospel. All men and all human values are destined to be recapitulated in Christ.'

'Universalism,' replied John Stott, 'fashionable as it is today, is incompatible with the teaching of Christ and his apostles, and is a deadly enemy of evangelism.'

In line with current ecumenical language, the Baptist Bishop called for an over-arching programme of interfaith and interdenominational approach to evangelism. He endorsed Emilio Castro's statement that 'social justice, personal salvation, cultural affirmation, church growth, are all seen as integral parts of God's saving act.'

In a short full of Christ 'Trees and Unites' prepared by the elders and deacons of the Nairobi Baptist Church as an evangelical response to the pre-Assembly documents, the authors made the important distinction between the work of the Church and the social concerns of social justice. While evangelism and social action are not exclusive of each other, they must not be confused. Nairobi did little to clear this confusion, so evident in Bangkok. The present political and political-historical situation in the world as 'salvation' is but another form of the liberal social gospel, and parallels the controversy in the medieval church on the holistic nature of faith and works. The Chicago Declaration and the London Statement of 1973, which 'is about salvation and ethics, and deserves careful study.

Another disturbing factor in the discussion on evangelism was the attempt by M. M. Thomas to synthesize the findings of recent discussions on evangelism, namely Bangkok, 1973, Lausanne, 1974, the Bishops' synod in Rome, 1974, and the Orthodox Consultation at Bucharest, 1974. Although he noted that Lausanne clearly distinguished between evangelism and social action, Thomas argued that these consultations were agreed in their affirmations of the comprehensive nature of salvation. To my mind the theological assumptions and defined goals of Bangkok and Lausanne are as different as cheese from chalk, and it is impossible to see these over these differences. It is significant that Thomas's call for a 'Christ-centred syncretism' caused some embarrassment to the Assembly.

Seeking community: the common search of people of various faiths, cultures and ideologies

The section under this heading dealt with the goal of mission and with dialogue between living faiths, which is a very sensitive area in contemporary ecumenical thinking. Although Metropolitan Gregoryos (Paul Vergheese) of India made it clear that the purpose of this section was to seek world community and not to debate dialogue, the interrelation between the two is such that one could not be discussed without the other. For Dr S. J. Samarthar, Director of the Programme for Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, the concern for the unity of mankind and world community replaces evangelism as the primary concern of the Assembly. For Metropolitan Gregoryos, religions on western culture and the decreasing influence of Christianity in many countries has intensified the desire for accepting religious plurality and the necessity for co-operation between religions. The Gospel for a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Jew, a Muslim and a Sikh were invited as guests to participate in the reality of religious plurality. Some of their insights were incorporated in the report.

The theological basis for world community proved unsatisfactory in the light of the total absence of any attempt at biblical exegesis. In the desire to minimize doctrinal differences and to achieve the unity of the church at the community level, the vertical, spiritual, dimensions of the debate were completely over-shadowed by the horizontal. Some participants wanted to describe the concern for global community as 'wider ecumenism'; others felt that the term 'ecumenical' should be restricted to inter-Christian dialogue and that the wider dialogue should be referred to as an inter-religious.

The presuppositional thinking of the leaders of this section, was, however, evident. It is, however, clear that a very significant change has taken place in ecumenical thinking. Hendrik

Kraemer's stress on the 'discontinuity' between the religions of man and the revelation of God, which dominated the WCC since the Tambaram Conference, has given way to a more theo-logical understanding of the universality of God's revelation. The emergence of a theology of 'a cosmic Christ' at the New Delhi Assembly and the popularizing of 'anonymous Christianity' by Karl Rahner and others is an indication of a new theology in the making. This may lead to a wider acceptance of a relativistic theology.

In this climate there is little sympathy for a unique and final revelation in Christ made known through the written Word of God as the only basis for the salvation of man.

The assumption that special revelation is only a particular case of general revelation has always been the hallmark of religious syncretistic thinking. This was reflected in the discussion on common spiritual experience, to understand with empathy the dimensions of worship, devotion and meditation in the religions and practice of the partners. Others rejected the term empathy on the grounds that spirituality is not a neutral factor. Christian prayer, for example, cannot be assimilated into other forms of spirituality. The final draft warned against the demonic in any religious or spiritual tradition and expressed a pastoral concern for those who feel threatened by the sharing of spirituality.

A last-minute addendum to the report presented to the plenary session was a preamble to the introduction which gave a welcome emphasis on the need to proclaim the great commission, to recognize the scandal of the gospel and to oppose any form of syncretism 'incipient, nascent or developed'. Strong opposition to this warning came from a number of Asian theologians, some of whom felt that for them Christianity itself was essentially syncretistic.

In the discussion in this section there was sharp debate on the nature, if any, of Jesus Christ's work in other religions, and also over the nature and use of the term 'community'. In the Raymond Johnson preparatory document that the Christian 'puts his trust in truth. He goes unarmed and ready to be himself converted. He may lose his life; he may also be born again', was paralleled by Dr Samartha's statements in a press conference.

In the areas of culture and ideologies the sectional report reflected many valuable insights shared by participants in the discussions. It stressed the diversity of culture, the secularity of technological change, the continuity between nation and city cultures. The belief that Jesus Christ both affirms and judges culture, that the church is
evangelization of the world'. He referred to the 2,700 million who do not know Christ and live under global ideological or religious systems. He rightly stressed that the one medium for the communication of the gospel was the Christian and the Christian community.

John Stott's long-awaited reply was received with considerable enthusiasm by the Assembly. But it was disappointing that the planned plenary debate on the theme was to be cancelled as the allotted time for the session had expired. There was widespread reaction against an emotive and vindictive reporting of Stott's address in the Assembly newspaper *Target*. After acknowledging the positive contribution of the WCC to the church and a prophetic reference to the twenty-seven theses of the document *Evangelism in Latin America Today*, Stott questioned whether the Bishop's address was typical of recent ecumenical utterances. He noted, 'It seems to many of us that the church has now been largely eclipsed by the quest for social and political liberation.' Stott made five affirmations of what the World Council needed to recover. He called for a recognition of the lostness of man and the judgment of God, confidence in the one revealed gospel, conviction concerning our stewardship to proclaim the uniqueness of Christ, a sense of urgency about the priority of evangelism, and a personal experience of Christ that could be applied to all of us, he said, 'I sometimes wonder if the greatest of all hindrances to evangelism today is not the poverty of our own spiritual experience. True evangelism is the spontaneous overflow of a heart full of Christ.'

The report of the section 'Confessing Christ Today' was undoubtedly the best statement of the Assembly. It affirmed the Church's evangelistic responsibility and called upon the churches to confess Christ as Lord and Saviour. It stressed the costliness of conversion and discipleship and deplored cheap conversions without ethical consequences. It declared, 'We regret that some reduce liberation from sin and evil to social and political action as would others limit liberation to the private and eternal dimension.' The report spoke with sensitivity on the many economic, political and ecclesiastical structures that obscure the confession of Christ and the Church's evangelistic witness. It deplored the dehumanizing. It emphasized both personal and communal confession of Christ, the importance of worship and a Christ-centred life-style. At least a third of the participants in the Assembly asked to be assigned to this section, indicating a widespread desire for a spiritual emphasis in the Assembly. It is hoped that this report will have an effective influence on the member churches and we hope the WCC Secretariat will press the many practical recommendations of the report upon the churches. A new orientation programme and shrinking income the WCC faces a crisis in the priorities of its programme.

On the negative side some of the theological assumptions embedded in the presentation and discussion of the report on evangelism were disturbing. At times Bishop Arias slipped into an incipient universalism. He described his experience of an integrated evangelistic programme of proclamation and action among atheistic Bolivian tin-miners struggling to create a new human being. He was enabled to 'see his own sin in his subject' and a 'new hope'. 'All that was missing was the naming of the Name and we had to recognize that perhaps these people had more of Christ in them than we who spoke in his name ever did.' He echoed another of his own Church's words, 'To evangelize is to help men to discover the Christ hidden in them and revealed in the gospel. All men and all human values are destined to be recapitulated in Christ.' 'Universalism,' replied John Stott, 'fashionable as it is today, is incompatible with the teaching of Christ and his apostles, and is a deadly enemy of evangelism.'

In line with current ecumenical language, the Bishop's address provided a new approach to evangelism. He endorsed Emilio Castro's statement that 'social justice, personal salvation, cultural affirmation, church growth, are all seen as integral parts of God's saving act.' In a significant document entitled *Christian Life* and *Christian Unity* prepared by the elders and deacons of the Nairobi Baptist Church as an evangelical response to the pre-Assembly documents, the authors made the important distinction between the two theological concerns of social justice and the concerns of social justice. While evangelism and social action are not exclusive of each other, they must not be confused. Nairobi did little to clear this confusion, so evident in Bangkok. The present social political situation and the many political candidates of a religious character who are in the world as 'salvation' but is another form of the liberal social gospel, and parallels the controversy in the medieval church on the holistic nature of faith and works. The Chicago Declara-
tion of 1973 and recent Jodhpur Declaration on salvation and ethics, and deserves careful study.

Another disturbing factor in the discussion on evangelism was the attempt by M. M. Thomas to synthesize the findings of recent debates on evangelism. In an evangelical camp, namely Bangkok, 1973, Lausanne, 1974, the Bishops' synod in Rome, 1974, and the Orthodox Consultation at Bucharest, 1974. Although he noted that Lausanne clearly distinguished between evangelism and social action, Thomas argued that these consultations were agreed in their affirmation of the comprehensive nature of salvation. To my mind the theological assumptions and defined goals of Bangkok and Lausanne are as different as cheese is from chalk, and it is impossible to discern over these differences. It was significant that Thomas's call for a 'Christ-centred syncretism' caused some embarrassment to the Assembly.

Seeking community: the common search of people of various faiths, cultures and ideologies

The section under this heading dealt with the goal of mission and with dialogue between living faiths, which is a very sensitive area in contemporary ecumenical thinking. Although Metropolitan Gregorios (Paul Varghese) of India made it clear that the purpose of this section was to seek world community and not to debate dialogue, the inter-relation between the two is such that one could not be discussed without the other. For Dr S. J. Samarth, Director of the Programme for Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, the concern for the unity of mankind and world community replaces evangelism as the primary concern of the Assembly. The meeting encouraged the religions on western culture and the decreasing influence of Christianity in many countries has intensified the desire for accepting religious plurality and the necessity for co-operation between religions. The Hindu, a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Jew, a Muslim and a Sikh were invited as guests to participate in the reality of religious plurality. Some of their insights were incorporated in the report.

The social and theological basis for world community proved unsatisfactory in the light of the total absence of any attempt at biblical exegesis. In the desire to minimize doctrinal differences and to underline the unity at the community level, the vertical, spiritual, dimensions of the debate were completely overshadowed by the horizontal. Some participants wanted to describe the concern for global community as 'wider ecumenism'; others felt that the term 'ecumenical' should be restricted to inter-Christian dialogue and that the wider dialogue should be referred to as an inter-religious one.

The presuppositional thinking of the leaders of this section, however, is only acknowledged. It is, however, clear that a very significant change has taken place in ecumenical thinking. Hendrik Kraemer's stress on the 'discontinuity' between the religions of man and the revelation of God, which dominated the WCC since the Tambaram Conference, has given way to the unifying and uniting dynamic of the universality of God's revelation. The emergence of a theology of 'a cosmic Christ' at the New Delhi Assembly and the popularizing of 'anonymous Christianity' by Karl Rahner and others indicates the way for a wider acceptance of a relativistic theology. In this climate there is little sympathy for a unique and final revelation in Christ made known through the written Word of God as the only basis for the salvation of man.

The assumption that special revelation is only a particular case of general revelation has always been the hallmark of religious syncretistic thinking. This was reflected in the discussion on common spiritual experience and the need to understand with empathy the dimensions of worship, devotion and meditation in the religious tradition and practice of the partners. Others rejected the term empathy on the grounds that spirituality is not a neutral factor. Christian prayer, for example, cannot be assimilated into other forms of spirituality. The final draft warned against the demonic in any religious or spiritual tradition and expressed a pastoral concern for those who feel threatened by the sharing of spirituality.

A last-minute addendum to the report presented to the plenary session was a preamble to the introduction which gave a welcome emphasis on the need to proclaim the great commission, to recognize the scandal of the gospel and to oppose any form of syncretism 'incipient, nascent or developed'. Strong opposition to this warning came from a number of Asian theologians, some of whom feared that global Christianity itself was essentially syncretistic.

In the discussion in this section there was sharp debate on the nature, if any, of Jesus Christ's work in other religions, and also over the nature and use of the term 'ecumenical in the preparatory document that the Christian 'puts his trust in truth. He goes unarmed and ready to be himself converted. He may lose his life; he may also be born again', was paralleled by Dr Samartha's statements in a press conference.

In the areas of culture and ideologies the sectional report reflected many valuable insights shared by participants in the discussions. It stressed the diversity of culture, the secularity of technology, the questioning of the traditional role of the church and cities. The belief that Jesus Christ both affirms and judges culture, that the church is
embodied in culture but not incarnate in it, are some of the contributions that evangelical participants were able to make to the report. It was rightly noted that the present disunity of Christians makes a mockery of the ecumenical vision as a model for world community. The discussion on ideologies and the search for community was dominated by participants from Eastern Europe and Cuba. The challenge of Marxist socialism enabled people to explore the historical structures of Marxism and the task of creating modern ideological structures. Many questions were raised but few answers given. Unfortunately there was virtually no discussion on biblical eschatology, without which any seeking of world community can only lead to a false utopia.

Christianity and cultural identity

The relationship of Christianity to national culture was a recurring theme that pervaded many aspects of the discussion on the Assembly on Education for Liberation and Community Spoke of alienation from culture and national history, and warned that educational systems and institutions are often mirror western society, reinforcing its practices and values. The increased Third World participation in the Nairobi Assembly brought into sharp focus the tension between westernized Christianity and national aspirations for self-identification and self-actualization. The proliferation of the plurality of cultures in the interests of Christian unity and world community surfaced again and again in group and plenary discussions and in experimentation in forms of worship. It appeared to many observers that the passion for cultural identity eclipsed the concern for faithfulness to biblical truth.

The Assembly was made a platform to vent feelings of resentment against the missionary movement as being western, triumphalist and neo-colonialist and the forerunner of new patterns of oppression and of sterile forms of theological understanding. While it is true that the missionary movement has sometimes been an unwitting tool of colonialism and oppression, it is also true that there is not always a need for a negative reaction to the biblical revelation, the contribution of the missionary movement in sacrificial service and compassion for suffering and oppressed peoples was unfortunately ignored. Ecumenical preoccupation with the plurality of gospels and with cultural theologies was very evident. The black theology of North America and South Africa, emphasizing black consciousness and the recovery of the dignity and power of the black man in self-knowledge, was given a sym- pathetic hearing. Similarly with the liberation theologies of Latin America and Asia. African theology, emphasizing the dignity of the African through the rediscovery of African culture and people, is now seen as a living force through the work of John Mbiti, a leading exponent of African theology, advocates transcending the immensity religious traditional life of African people into a Christian life-style in the context of modern technological society. The late Dr Byang Kato, General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar, expressed his concern that the sources for African theology are increasingly African rather than the Bible. In the attempt to interpret the pre-Christian and pre-Muslim African experience of their gods, Kato saw African theology heading for syncretism and universalism. He was not alone in his concern that the application of Christian theology to the African situation. ‘It is not a black Jesus or a black god we want, but obedience to the omnipotent God of the Bible.

Two events that took place during the Assembly illustrate this tension. The All-Africa Conference of Churches, the coordinating structure for ecumenical activities in Africa, took time out of the Assembly for an elaborate and well-prepared ecumenical assembly to be held in Kenya in 1979. The proposed credentialing of the church, estimated to cost twelve million shillings, located on the outskirts of Nairobi. The colourful ceremony, involving several professional dance groups, centred around the chief guest, President Kenyatta. When it was announced that the proceedings had the aura of a political event rather than one called to give glory to God. The roughness foundation stone dug from Lake Turkana on the Kenya-Ethiopia border, where archaeologists now dig for the remains of ancient civilization that Christianity was being built on the pre-historic civilizations of Africa. The President spoke of the impact of pre-Christian knowledge of our myths, which influenced and shaped early Christianity. The President of the WCC Assembly on Lutheran Church and appealed for a return to the genius of authentic cultural traditions. As an observer I felt that Christianity in Africa was in danger of becoming a tool for the furtherance of national interests and the uniformity of culture and religion.

The second event was the play Muntu, presented on the second day of the Assembly. The AACC had commissioned a Ghanaian playwright, now working with the University of Nairobi, to present his interpretation of what Africa's past had to say to Africa's present. Muntu, the word for man in several African languages, and his son and daughters are searching for the essence of being free and for communal identity. The play delves into the pre-Christian era symbolizing man's harmony with nature and the rhythm of the seasons. Comparative peace and happiness reign in the tribal society. The modern tragedy begins with the arrival of the Christian missionaries, who in turn introduce the cross, the Bible and a gun in the other, followed by traders offering bargains in silks, cottons, and with guns and liquor, and by a mining engineer grasping for gold and diamonds, alongside merciless Arab slave traders. The pre-Christian era symbolizing man's communion with nature, limits his interests to the spiritual while the colonists defraud the Africans of their land and turn them into slaves. This in turn leads to a second cycle of oppression in which Muntu's second son becomes a puppet for the mission and in turn oppressing his own people. In their increasing alienation the people long for the days of their ancestors. At last Muntu himself returns to revive the old religious pattern and a powerless messiah, Nana, synthesizes Christian and traditional African culture. The play ends abruptly with despair. Nothing which Africa has learnt or suffered has brought back harmony. The future is dark and unknown. The play raised many important issues but I was left with a question of Christian mission in Africa. The implicit call to return to pre-Christian culture is no answer to the complexity of the modern world.

The call for martyrdom, which has become a new form of theological thinking since Bangkok, received surprisingly little direct attention during the Assembly, though the AACC had asked for it to be put on the agenda. Evangelicals are not opposed to martyrdom, rightly understood, if in particular situations it leads to the strengthening of national leadership, a new thrust in evangelism and church growth and the release of resources for un secularized areas. The Lausanne Covenant drew attention to the highly problematic contribution of the AEAM, meeting in Nairobi prior to the WCC Assembly, published a statement asking for a theological clarification of the call for martyrdom. Unfortunately the statement was given little publicity during the Assembly and provoked little discussion.

The struggle for liberation and the quest for human development

Undoubtedly the main focus in the planning of the Nairobi Assembly was the theme of liberation from political, economic, social and personal oppression. This holistic interpretation of liberation articulated at Bangkok pervaded every session of the Assembly. We were faced with the enormity of institutional oppression found in the modern world. As evangelicals we were convicted of our over-generalizations which often do little more than maintain the status quo. At the same time we were appalled by the lack of awareness of God's love and truth in our midst, the need to save individuals and nations from destruction. It was a heyday for Pelagianism.

The issues raised were selective. Racism continued to be the number one item on the agenda. Professor Brown pre-empted the issue with a self-condemnation of himself as one who was white, a male, a member of the affluent class and a citizen of the USA, all of which he called 'a litany of shame'. The Programme to Combat Racism, which was instituted since the Uppsala Assembly, was endorsed, and criticism of the misuse of its funds for violent programs of liberation largely muted. Racism in South Africa was once again singled out for attack and various embargoes proposed. Several multi-national companies were named and condemned for their technical and financial involvement in nuclear collaboration with South Africa. It appears that any hope of change through peace talks held in Geneva were dashed.

Solutions calling for the observance of fundamental human rights in several parts of the world were adopted. In Latin America, details of oppression were listed and the governments of Argentina and Chile were condemned. World powers were asked to respect the autonomy and territorial integrity of Angola. The three liberation movements were only mildly criticized for their failure to establish a unified government. The PLO's representation of the Palestinian people to self-determination were recognized but there was no condemnation of oppressive Arab economic policies nor of the PLO's goal to eliminate Israel as a nation. A plea for the protection of the rights of non-Arab refugees was the only area where the Assembly called for support of the rights of all non-Arab refugees. The Assembly appealed for the implementation of the Helsinki agreement; an amendment expressing concern about the restrictions of religious liberty in the USSR was carried by an overwhelming majority, but then, following strong protests from the Russian delegation, was revoked, and after much behind-the-scenes debate and a special evening session a new motion was passed that the Assembly should make no statement for a report at the first meeting of the Central Committee. In this failure of nerve, many delegates felt the WCC had lost its credibility and
embodied in culture but not incarnate in it, are some of the contributions that evangelical participants were able to make to the report. It was rightly noted that the present dissunity of Christians makes a mockery of the ecumenical model. The Assembly suggested that this was a lesson for world community. The discussion on ideologues and the search for community was dominated by participants from Eastern Europe and Cuba. The challenge of Marxist socialism enabling society and life-style in many of the modern technological societies. The late Dr Byang Kato, General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar, expressed his concern that the sources for African theology and increasingly African-Christian ministry rather than the Bible. In the attempt to interpret the pre-Christian and pre-Muslim African experience of their gods, Kato saw African theology heading for syncretism and universalism. He pressed not just on the application of Christian theology to the African situation. ‘It is not a black Jesus or a black god we want, but obedience to the omnipotent God of the Bible.’

Two events that took place during the Assembly illustrate this tension. The All-Africa Conference of Churches, the co-ordinating structure for ecumenical activities in Africa, took time out of the Assembly for an elaborate and well-prepared meeting to determine the headquarters, estimated to cost twelve million shillings, located on the outskirts of Nairobi. The colourful ceremony, involving several professional dance groups, centred around the chief guest, President Kenyatta. And as it proceeds had the aura of a political event rather than one called to give glory to God. The rough-hewn foundation stone dug from Lake Turkana on the Kenya-Ethiopia border, where archaeologists have discovered the oldest and best evidence that Christianity was being built on the pre-historic civilizations of Africa. The President spoke of the impact of pre-Christian knowledge of our fathers, which influenced and shaped early Christian missionaries in the understanding of the church and appealed for a return to the genius of authentic cultural traditions. As an observer I felt that Christianity in Africa was in danger of becoming a tool for the furtherance of national associations and the unification of culture and religion.

The second event was the play Muntu, presented on the second day of the Assembly. The AACC had commissioned a Ghanaian playwright, now working with the University of Nairobi, to present his interpretation of what Africa’s past had to say to Africa’s present. Muntu, the word for man in several African languages, and his sons and daughters are searching for the essence of being free and for communal identity. The play deals with some of the pre-Christian era symbolizing man’s harmony with nature and the rhythm of the seasons. Comparative peace and happiness reign in the tribal society. The modern tragedy begins with the arrival of the white missionary. In holding the cross in one hand and a gun in the other, followed by traders offering bargains in silks, cottons, and with guns and liquor, and by a mining engineer grasping for gold and diamonds, alongside merciless Arab slave traders. The pre-Christian era symbolizing mass conversions, limits his interests to the spiritual while the colonists defraud the Africans of their land and turn them into slaves. This in turn leads to a second cycle of oppression in which Muntu’s second son becomes their secondary dictator oppressing his own people. In their increasing alienation the people long for the days of their ancestors. At last Muntu himself returns to revive the old religious pattern and a powerless messiah, Nana, synthesizes Christian and traditional elements and reasserts his power in the background. The play ends abruptly with despair. Nothing which Africa has learnt or suffered has brought back harmony. The future is dark and unknown. The play raised many important issues in the debate on Christianization in Africa. The implicit call to return to pre-Christian culture is no answer to the complexity of the modern world.

The call for monitarium, which has become a major subject of ecumenical thinking since Bangkok, received surprisingly little direct attention during the Assembly, though the AACC had asked for it to be put on the agenda. Evangelicals are not opposed to monitarium but understand, if in particular situations it leads to the strengthening of national leadership, a new thrust in evangelism and church growth and the release of resources for unevaluated areas. The Lausanne Covenant drew attention to the logical link between the Resolution of the AEAM, meeting in Nairobi prior to the WCC Assembly, published a statement asking for a theological clarification of the call for monitarium. Unfortunately the statement was given little publicity during the Assembly and provoked little discussion.

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The issues raised were selective. Racism continued to be the number one item on the agenda. Professor Brown pre-empted the issue with a self-condemnation of himself as one who was white, a male, a member of the affluent class and a citizen of the USA, all of which he called ‘a litany of shame’. The Programme to Combat Racism, which was instituted since the Uppsala Assembly, was endorsed, and criticism of the misuse of its funds for violent programmes of liberation largely muted. Racism in South Africa was once again singled out for attack and various embargoes proposed. Several multi-national companies were named and condemned for their technical and financial involvement in nuclear collaboration with South Africa. It appears that any hope of change through peace talks has been dashed.

Resolutions calling for the observance of fundamental human rights in several parts of the world were adopted. In Latin America, details of oppression were listed and the governments of Argentina and Brazil were specifically criticized. World powers were asked to respect the autonomy and territorial integrity of Angola. The three liberation movements were only mildly criticized for their failure to establish a unified government in Angola. The Portuguese refusal to allow the Angolans to people to self-determination were recognized but there was no condemnation of oppressive Arab economic policies nor of the PLO’s goal to eliminate Israel as a nation. A plea for the protection of the environment was also made but there was no call for freedom for each community to worship was accepted. The Assembly appealed for the implementation of the Helsinki agreement; an amendment expressing concern about the restriction of religious liberty in the USSR was carried by an overwhelming majority, but then, following strong protests from the Russian delegation, was revoked, and after much behind-the-scenes debate and a special evening session a new motion was passed which committed the US to non-lending for a report at the first meeting of the Central Committee. In this failure of nerve, many delegates felt the WCC had lost its credibility and
forsaken its prophetic function by its selective indignation.

Sexism was singled out as a major social evil. It was argued that women have been excluded from decision-making processes, they would be unable to realize their full partnership with men, both in the church and in society. A change was needed in the theological understanding of equal participation in society, and in relationships, particularly in the family. There was a strong voice in favour of full ordination of women to the ministry. The Assembly set a commendable example in responding to this concern. 20% of the delegates, be they men or women, were included in the six new Vice-Presidents: women and women shared equally with men in chairing the sessions. In all the presentations on sexism, however, no attempt was made to give a biblical basis to the new stance and only one speaker recognized the existence of deliberate sin in sexism.

The growing gap between the rich and poor nations was rightly recognized as a major issue of our time. The only solution offered to this evil was that of relativistic democracy and democracy was particularly true of the brilliant address by the Hon. Michael Manley, Prime Minister of Jamaica. Some of the suggestions for public participation and peoples’ tribunals had a familiar Marxist ring about them.

A plenary address on ‘Creation, Technology and Human Survival’ by Professor Charles Birch, a biologist from Sydney, was by far the most significant paper in the area of human justice. He saw the world as on a titanic course. Only a change in direction could avert total disaster. In a well-documented address he outlined five threats to survival, namely, population explosion, which will more than double in the next 15 years; food scarcity, in which the present 300 million people now living at starvation level will increase to a billion within thirty-five years; the rapid depletion of non-renewable resources such as fossil fuels; global pollution, which is doubling every fourteen years; and the threat of war with stock-piling of atomic bombs. He argued that technology is an uncertain blessing and he appealed for a sustainable global society with zero population growth, zero growth in consumable goods and zero growth in pollution. He failed to deal adequately with the problem of war.

Birch is an admirer of process theology. Arguing that ecology is an essential element in salvation and evangelization he put an exclamation of the intrinsic value of nature in which God is present. His appeal for a change of heart towards nature failed to grapple with the problem of sin against God and ignores the ultimate hope of the second coming of Christ and the new heaven and new earth.

In personal discussion, Dr Birch admitted that his position was basically one of panentheism, which sees God in everything and everything in God, an interlocking relationship between the two. He went on to say that this interlocking relationship between the Creator and the creature, blurs the nature of sin and has no place for a biblical eschatology. He underlined the neo-Platonism of the medieval mystics and is central to the theology of Teilhard de Chardin and J. A. T. Robinson. It is the heart of the movement towards universalism and syncretism and it constitutes the most fundamental theological crisis facing the WCC today.

A conclusion

The WCC faces an acute crisis of faith and ethics. David Edward commented on Uppsala, ‘For the sake of the world, the next Assembly should be more theological.’ This did not happen at Nairobi. Unless there is a return to truly biblical theology before the next Assembly the WCC ship is on a perilous course. As evangelical theologians we must respond to this challenge and we must do so with theology of world evangelization which takes seriously the lostness of man. We need a fresh understanding of the church and its discipling of the nations in relation to the kingdom of God. We need to reorientate the church towards the light of the Word. The WCC clarifying the relationship of God the Creator to God as Saviour, and a renewed emphasis on the cross, the resurrection and salvation by grace alone through faith. In the power of the Holy Spirit we need a new, confident but humble trust in the Lordship of Jesus Christ enabling us to stand against temptation, persecution and death itself. We are called to be faithful interpreters and communicators of the one gospel. This will inevitably involve costly self-sacrifice.

It is of supreme importance that we evangelicals who acknowledge the full authority of Scripture stay together as a world-wide community, recognizing the diversity of gifts and ministries that God has given to the church. We must support those evangelicals who, in good conscience, and as belonging to member churches of the WCC, accept their responsibility to maintain an evangelical witness within the ecumenical structures. We must equally support those evangelicals, who in good conscience, will continue to remain totally apart from the WCC and who through strictly evangelical structures proclaim the whole counsel of God. May Jesus Christ free us to unite him as his ambassadors of judgment and hope to a dying world.

Jesus Christ frees

Nairobi Baptist Church

Shortly before the World Council of Churches’ Assembly met in Nairobi, the elders and deacons of the Nairobi Baptist Church issued a pamphlet, referred to by Bruce Nichols in the preceding article, giving an evangelical comment on some of the key themes raised by the preparatory material for the Assembly. We reprint here, with permission, the major section of their pamphlet, dealing with perhaps the most controversial issue of the Assembly, that of liberation and its relation to Christian salvation.

1. Freedom in current theology

‘Freedom’ is a word with a host of meanings. To many today its most relevant significance is in the sense of economic and political liberation from oppressive systems. There is no doubt that the quest of the liberation movements is a topic of vital concern for Christians. We agree with the words of the Balfour Conference, ‘Evil works both in personal life and in exploitative social structures.’ Christians have often neglected to participate in struggles for social justice because of an individualistic emphasis on ‘personal salvation’. We agree with some changes noted in this west, a missionary movement when it has allowed itself to become the tool of colonial imperialism or by silence failed to exercise its prophetic responsibility to condemn exploitation.

So total theological confusion has been introduced into this area of Christian involvement in socio-political affairs by reference to biblical terms in a way inconsistent with their total biblical usage. To use New Testament terms like ‘salvation’, ‘freedom’, ‘deliverance’, in a context of political liberation is semantically incorrect and leads to a misrepresentation of Christian truth. Questions of social justice are ethical, not sociological. This in no way lessens the importance of these questions for the Christian but seeks to place them on a theologically adequate foundation. Two areas of contemporary theology are particularly responsible for this confusion between socio-ethical and ethical issues, and both are given publicity in the World Council of Churches documents. They are ‘theology of liberation’ and ‘black theology’.

a. Theology of liberation

The passionate concern for liberation of oppressed peoples expressed in the theology of liberation formulated in Latin America is something every Christian must admire. However, there is an attempt to interpret such ‘liberations’ as part of the eschatological salvation which Christ has brought. Consider, for example, these statements from the Bolivian Manifesto on Evangelism recently published by the World Council of Churches (February 1975):

‘We do not accept that the idea of evangelism means only “saving souls” and seeking exclusively a “change in the eternal status of the individual”’ . . .

‘Evangelization in motion the human forces of liberation. The Gospel of Christ aims at liberating man from all the forces that oppress him, whether internal or external, personal or impersonal’. . .Consequently the efforts in favour of justice and participation in the task of liberation of man and his terms of oppression are an integral part of the proclamation of the Gospel.’

b. Black theology

A second contemporary theology which is seeking to identify the experience of liberation with Christian salvation is the black theology that has grown up in the USA and in southern Africa. We share the experience of ‘black identity’ which this theology seeks to express, but in this enthusiasm biblical lines are followed.

For instance, Gayraud Wilmore in a passage cited in the Nairobi document says:
forsaken its prophetic function by its selective indignation.
Sexitism was singled out as a major social evil. It was argued that when women were excluded from decision-making processes, they would be unable to realize their full partnership with men, both in the church and in society. A change was needed in the theological understanding of equal participation in society, and in relationships, particularly in the family. There was a strong voice in favour of full ordination of women to the ministry. The Assembly set a commendable example in responding to this concern. 20% of the delegates, both men and women, are women and women shared equally with men in chairing the sessions. In all the presentations on sexism, however, no attempt was made to give a biblical basis to the new stance and only one speaker recognized the existence of deliberate sin in sexism.

The growing gap between the rich and poor nations was recognized as a major issue of our time. The only solution offered to this evil was that of more democratic democracy. This was particularly true of the brilliant address by the Hon. Michael Manley, Prime Minister of Jamaica. Some of the suggestions for public participation and peoples' tribunals had a familiar Marxist ring about them.

A plenary address on 'Creation, Technology and Human Survival' by Professor Charles Birch, a biologist from Sydney, was by far the most significant paper in the area of human justice. He saw the world as on its way to extinction. Only a change in direction could avert total disaster. In a well-documented address he outlined five threats to survival, namely, population explosion, which will increase to 1 billion people in the next 15 years; food scarcity, in which the present 300 million people now living at starvation level will increase to a billion within thirty-five years; the rapid depletion of non-renewable resources such as fossil fuels; global pollution, which is doubling every fourteen years; and the threat of war with stock-piling of atomic bombs. He argued that technology is an uncertain blessing and he appealed for a sustainable global society with zero population growth, zero growth in consumable goods and zero growth in pollution. He failed to deal adequately with the problem of war.

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For instance, Gayraud Wilmore in a passage cited in the Nairobi document says:
the Christian will realize that there are ethical considerations to be weighed. The end does not justify the means; if violence has to be employed, therefore, the Christian might partake with a sense of regret and reservation, knowing that violence is at best only the lesser of two evils. It is, however, mischievous to suggest that violent liberation attempts are justifiable from the New Testament doctrine of salvation. While physical freedom is desirable, a man can be saved in the eschatological Christian sense through faith in the redeeming work of Christ and yet still have the status of slave in this world.40 This work of Christ is for both oppressor and oppressed.

We believe the proper balance on these issues is adequately stated in the Lausanne covenant:

'Though reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evasion...

40 Eph. 6: 5-9.

Covenant of the International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, 1974: para. 5.

Shalom: content for a slogan

David Gillett

David Gillett, who lectures in Mission and Old Testament at St John's College, Nottingham, England, takes another biblical term which is widely used in current theological writing, and subjects it to a careful word study to see whether its modern use matches its biblical meaning. The article is an expansion of one published in The Shaftesbury Project Newsletter, no. 11 (October/November 1975).

'Shalom': what do we mean?

"All speak today of peace—we too," the statement often rings in our ears... "Leave me in peace," says the person who wants to have his rest. "Have peace in your heart," says the other who does not concern himself for the evil world. "Peace to all men who are of good will!"—but not to the others who are of evil will. "Peace to the houses—not to the palaces," demand others. "There is peace only on the side of capitalism"—some say. "With Communism the only way one can relax is to have two weapons in one's hand," say others. The more earnestly we hear all the voices, the more we recognize that it is not enough merely to praise peace, to extol readiness for peace, and to bless every speech of peace.

Jürgen Moltmann expresses well both the urgent desire for peace in our world and the confusion people feel in their search for it. It is a cry which many in the church are trying to take very seriously. How can we approach our mission in such a way that we speak relevantly to this most basic felt need of modern man? A very influential answer, that has gained wide acceptance during the last decade, is the idea that 'the goal of mission is the establishment of shalom'.

This view of mission has within it a deeply humane, loving and practical concern for the plight of real people (not always a mark of the Christian's attitude to the world), but at the same time it has a fundamental flaw. The danger with this very widely accepted definition of mission is that an Old Testament concept is turned into a slogan. From the standpoint of Old Testament theology and semantics this use of shalom is so imprecise, confused and selective that it is highly misleading.

What makes the situation of even greater concern is the fact that, if a word is used long enough, people tend to accept that it is being used correctly. One frequently hears passages where the use of shalom is central but where the word itself does not occur; these also need to be studied. Von Rad's experience of the difficulties in tackling the meaning of shalom should make anyone extremely cautious and thorough before using the word to express one of the central tenets of a theology. 'It has a certain inner imprecision, so that the translator who has no such many-sided term at his command is often at a loss to know whether he understands God's gift of God's grace to his restored people, he should use the more concrete "well-being", the more obvious "peace", or the theologically more comprehensive "salvation". The richness of an Old Testament word consists not in the conglomerate of several meanings from different contexts but in a careful study which differentiates the various contexts (historical, theological, and literary) in which the word occurs.

This precise and over-general use of shalom in its this-world-oriented sense means that the content of mission is often seen exclusively in terms of social and political change. Not only is this a theology based on partial meanings of Old Testament words interpreted to certain doctrinal presuppositions, but it also claims to be a Christian theology while failing to take account of the fulfilment and particularity which the concept of 'peace' receives in the person of Christ.

On the basis of such a fundamental hermeneutical leap, shalom can then be used (as it is in the first extract from J. G. Davies above) as the basis for a universalism quite out of keeping with the New Testament doctrine of salvation. The consequence of thus bypassing the fulfilment of the Old in the New effectively means that shalom is 'secularized'—wrenched out of the context of salvation history. To summarize, the process is to take part of an Old Testament word and interpret it according to the above truth; the result is a view of the church's mission as a socio-political task which fits easily alongside Semantics in Biblical Research (London, 1972), one would suppose in the non-communist world at least to use an Old Testament word in such a cavalier fashion as shalom often is.


7 And note that while the word shalom is used rather than eirēnē, the New Testament equivalent: the former more adequately expresses the broad this-world-oriented view.

the Christian will realize that there are ethical considerations to be weighed. The end does not justify the means; if violence has to be employed, therefore, the Christian might participate but with a sense of regret and reservation, knowing that violence is at best only the lesser of two evils. It is, however, mischievous to suggest that violent liberation attempts are justifiable from the New Testament doctrine of salvation. While physical freedom is desirable, a man can be saved in the eschatological Christian sense through faith in the redeeming work of Christ and yet still have the status of slave in this world.8 This work of Christ is for both oppressor and oppressed.9

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'Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evasion of God and man, our love for our neighbour, and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ, they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.'

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Here Jürgen Moltmann expresses well both the urgent desire for peace in our world and the confusion people feel in their search for it. It is a cry which many in the church are trying to take very seriously. How can we approach our mission in such a way that we speak relevantly to this most basic felt need of modern man? A very influential answer, that has gained wide acceptance during the last decade, is the idea that 'the goal of mission is the establishment of shalom'. This view of mission has within it a deeply humane, loving and practical concern for the plight of real people (not always a mark of the Christianity's attitude to the world), but at the same time it has a fundamental flaw. The danger with this very widely accepted definition of mission is that an Old Testament concept is turned into a slogan. From the standpoint of Old Testament theology and semantics this use of shalom is so imprecise, confused and selective that it is highly misleading.

What makes the situation of even greater concern is the fact that, if a word is used long enough, people tend to accept that it is being used correctly. Consequently, some passages where the use of shalom is central but where the word itself does not occur; these also need to be studied. Von Rad's experience of the difficulties in tackling the meaning of shalom should make anyone extremely cautious and thorough before using the word to express one of the central tenets of a theology. 'It has a certain inner imprecision, so that the translator who has no such many-sided term at his command is often at a loss to know whether such a gift as God's is a gift of God's grace to his restored people, or the word, more general, more powerful as a word of God.'10 The richness of an Old Testament concept not in the conglomerate of several meanings from differing contexts but in a careful study which differentiates the various contexts (historical, theological, and literary) in which the word occurs.

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Seminaries in Biblical Research (London, 1972), one would suggest that a more scientific word like robust is a better choice than the popular expression use of shalom in this way, accepting it as biblically accurate.

I believe that shalom has a valid and necessary place in any biblical understanding of salvation and mission; the urgent need, therefore, is to rescue it from further devaluation as an all-embracing slogan which is either misleading or almost contentless.

Only half a meaning

The following extracts from Dialogue with the World by J. G. Davies illustrate some of the basic presuppositions behind this use of shalom.

'Shalom' is a social happening, an event in interpersonal relations. It can therefore never be reduced to a simple formula; it has to be found and worked out in actual situations. The goal towards which God is working, i.e. the ultimate end of his mission, is the establishment of shalom, and this involves the realization of the full potentialities of all creation and its ultimate reconciliation and unity in Christ.1

'If the goal of mission is the establishment of shalom, we are required to enter into partnership with God in history to renew society. When the Freedom Workers go to prison in the southern states of the USA because of their part in the struggle for civil rights, they are participating in mission and seeking to erect signs of shalom.'

The first and fundamental error is a careless approach to the use of an Old Testament word. There is a failure to treat the word shalom seriously. It is a word which is not out of context and the various root meanings which it can have in different contexts are used as the authoritative and collective sense of the word in the Old Testament. This reveals a simplistic etymology and a naive approach to Old Testament use of words. In short, the word study is not taken to follow the development and the change of meaning, not in artificial isolation from the life of Israel, but within the larger framework of the history of the institution.'

1 J. G. Davies, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, III, p. 765. 2 Von Rad notes two further cautions.
b. Shalom is a communal concept
There are more passages where shalom is used of groups rather than of individuals, and we are therefore justified in concluding that, at heart, peace has to do with a social or communal relationship rather than a state, and thus we find it connected with the idea of covenant (Nv 25: 12; Dt 29: 19; Is 54: 10; Ezk 34: 25; 37: 26).

c. Shalom is a religious concept
At source, shalom is a gift of Yahweh and its religious use is foundational and primary. (In as far as it is used as a purely non-religious term, von Rad considers this a later development.) It is not sufficient therefore to regard the one of the names of the Messiah is Shalom (Is 9: 6) but to say that shalom is a religious concept is emphatically not to say that it is essentially spiritual. ‘When we consider the rich possibilities of shalom in the OT we are struck by the negative fact that there is no specific text in which it denotes the specifically spiritual attitude of inner peace.” (Tranquillity of mind is not the essential concept of religious peace, which is a spiritualisation of the Jewish duty of the positive goods of the moral slogan that it has rescued shalom, peace, from the realms of pietism and quietism where it had slumbered so long and so unjustifiably.

d. Shalom is conditional
At its most forthright, ‘There is no peace, says the Lord, for the wicked’ (Is 48: 22). Shalom is not an indiscriminate gift of Yahweh; he consciously withholds peace if the people are disobedient or rebellious (Is 48: 18), and, conversely, when righteousness is present, shalom will follow (Is 32: 16f; Ps 72: 7). The recurring mistake for the Israelite was to assume that shalom was his irrespective of his behavior. He was to be among a man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God to serve the gods of those nations, tribe, one whom, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant no man of the congregation of Israel, Christ Jesus, every man has been a member of the new mankind. The Church Inside Out (London, 1967) p. 19.

1 J. C. Hoekendijk, a former secretary of evangelism in the WCC, gives expression to the universalism typical of this approach to mission. ‘The passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ are for all men. Now the whole of mankind is delivered from bondage and brought into covenant, becoming part of the New Man, Christ Jesus, every man has been a member of the new mankind.” The Church Inside Out (London, 1967) p. 19.

2 The use of shalom is univocally health and to refer to salvation are at times very closely integrated (Ez 2: 14). This is obviously not universally true, and the question about the place of healing within the doctrine of salvation, a debate that coincides at several points with the socio-political questions which surround shalom.


5 J. F. A. Sawyer, op. cit., p. 88.


7 It is therefore quite illegitimate to use shalom as part of any progressive, universalistic view of mission and world history. Throughout the Old Testament shalom again and again occurs in the context of righteous community and justice (Ps 34: 14; 37: 37; 85: 10; Is 30: 17; Zc 8: 16). Justice means a right reciprocal relationship between man and man and between man and God. Consequently shalom means ways of living in a just relationship in both dimensions, and if we are aiming at only one of these then we will achieve not be shalom, but the false hope of the faithless Israelite.

e. Shalom is an eschatological-salvation concept
Hebrew thought recognizes that shalom is the ideal state achieved only in the final age. Their hope of this future shalom included peace in the animal realm (Is 11: 6-8); peace among men as individuals (Is 2: 4); and peace among nations (Is 2: 4). Shalom is God’s gift now, its fullness is still firmly in the future.

In this respect shalom expresses the central thought of salvation in the Old Testament. We see the positive expression of shalom in the word yā‘ād (to save) which ‘denotes general health, physical and spiritual, rather than actual separation from a particular enemy or danger.’ The connection with justice which we have seen with shalom is also present. It is in the context of personal injustice, and in particular unjust oppression of the chosen people, that a mō‘ēth is needed. And both words fit into the same eschatological hope that expects physical, spiritual, and social wholeness. It is the goal of the New Testament mission as shalom as this is expressive of the central expectation of salvation as it develops in the Old Testament— but it is an expectation that time and space is fulfilled in part only in the succeeding events of Israel’s history.

It was indeed one of the major tasks of the prophets to defend the eschatological dimension of salvation from the desire of many to make it a hope that is fulfilled in a more limited way, in part only, in the present in the New Testament as the love which should be seen between individual Christians in the church. Thus the distinctive New Testament concept of agape takes on part of the area covered by shalom in the Old Testament. (Rom 15: 13). But by far the greater transforming influence is found in the rabbinic use of shalom. These concepts in particular affect the New Testament understanding of peace.

(i) The rabbinic emphasis is on peace as opposed to strife between individuals, rather than between nations. The absence of peace between individuals in society becomes an even greater danger than the absence of peace between Gentiles and Jews (in the here and now; this is seen in their attempt to distinguish between the true and false promises of peace (1 Ki 22: 5-18). Particularly in the case of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the question ‘What is shalom?’ is a point of much discussion.

(ii) Rabbinic literature develops the new idea of the relationship between man and God as being one of conflict and hostility. This enmity needs to become shalom. This new dimension injected into


9 See further TDNT, II, pp. 406-411.
To be fair to an Old Testament concept

Etymologically, *shalom* is a multi-coloured word. The root meaning is 'to be whole, uninjured, undivided', and it is used in an enormous variety of contexts, often with connotations of domestic life to the most profound religious expectations.

At its most basic it describes general well-being, a wholly satisfactory condition (Gn. 15: 15; 26: 29; Ex. 18: 23; Jdg. 19: 20; 1 Sa. 16: 5; 2 Sa. 18: 28; Is. 55: 12; Je. 34: 5; etc.). It is used in the title of the King James version of the Bible (Ps. 38: 3; 73: 3; Is. 57: 18, f.), as a greeting (Gn. 29: 6; 43: 27; 1 Sa. 6: 14f.), and as a word of salvation (Is. 54: 10; 60: 17; Je. 29: 11; Ezek. 34: 23).

When we consider *shalom* not only as a word but as a theological concept, we become aware of marked historical developments in usage and meaning at several points. Bearing this process in mind, the following can be isolated as the main features of *shalom*.

a. Shalom is a positive concept

The term originally meant nothing with the passive or the negative. It described peace between friends, it signified that everything was as it should be (Ex. 18: 23); if you have *shalom*, then you have everything. In essence, therefore, *shalom* did not mean absence of war, and this negative meaning never became central in Hebrew thought. In the great days of fighting Israel, *shalom* meant victory in war, the positive goal of the conflict for Yahweh. Gideon’s words to the men of Penuel are a far cry from the passive quiescent understanding we have of peace: ‘When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower’ (Jdg. 8: 2). When this older concept of the fighting Israel faded away, the absence of war was seen as part of the eschatological hope (e.g. Is. 2: 4) but *shalom* never became identified with the negative idea.

b. Shalom is a communal concept

There are more passages where *shalom* is used of groups than of individuals, and we are therefore justified in concluding that, at heart, peace has to do with the social community, not with the individual. *Shalom* then denotes a relationship rather than a state, and thus we find it connected with the idea of covenant (Nu. 25: 12; Dt. 29: 19; Is. 54: 10; Ezek. 34: 25; 37: 26).

c. Shalom is a religious concept

At source, *shalom* is a gift of Yahweh and its religious use is foundational and primary. (In as far as it is used as a purely non-religious term, von Rad considers this a later development.) It is not used by itself there to find the one of the names of the Messiah is *Shalom* (Is. 9: 6). But to say that *shalom* is a religious concept is emphatically not to say that it is essentially ‘spiritual’. When we consider the rich possibilities of *shalom* in the OT we are struck by the negativeness of the phrase. There is no specific text in which it denotes the specifically spiritual attitude of inward peace.

Tranquility of mind is not the essential concept of religious *shalom*. The popularly popular image (e.g. Ps. 29: 11) is a picture of the positive gains of the mountain slogan that it has rescued *shalom*, peace, from the realms of pietism and quietism where it had slumbered long and so unjustifiably.

d. Shalom is conditional

At its most forthright, ‘There is no peace, says the Lord, for the wicked’ (Is. 48: 22). *Shalom* is not an indiscriminate gift of Yahweh; he consciously withholds peace if the people are disobedient or rebellious (Is. 48: 18), and, conversely, when righteousness is present, *shalom* will follow (Is. 32: 16f.; Ps. 72: 7). The recurring remark for the Israelite was to assume that *shalom* was his unregenerate condition. It was only by becoming a part of the people, his family, that he could be among you a man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God to serve the gods of those nations, tribes, one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, covenant which we are making with you today, that I have *shalom*, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.’ This would lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike (Dt. 29: 11f.).

It is therefore quite illegitimate to use *shalom* as part of any progressive, universalistic view of mission and world history. Throughout the Old Testament *shalom* shows again and again occurs in the context of righteousness and judgment (Ps. 34: 14; 37: 37; 85: 10; Is. 60: 17; Zc. 8: 16). Justice means a right reciprocal relationship between man and man and between man and God. Consequently steps always ways of forming relationships in these dimensions, and if we are aiming at only one of these then we will achieve not *shalom* but the false hope of the faithless Israelite.

e. Shalom is an eschatological-salvation concept

Hebrew thought recognizes that *shalom* is the ideal state achieved only in the final age. Their hope of this future *shalom* included peace in the animal realm (Is. 11: 6-8); peace among men as individuals (Is. 11: 1-9); peace among nations (Is. 2: 4-4). Although *shalom* is God’s gift now, its fullness is still firmly in the future.

In this respect *shalom* expresses the central thought of salvation in the Old Testament. We see the positive extension of *shalom* in the word *yāšā* (to save) which ‘denotes general health, physical and spiritual, rather than actual separation from a particular enemy or danger’.

The connection with justice which we have seen with *shalom* is also present. It is open to the hearer that injustice, and in particular unjust oppression of the chosen people, that a *mōret* is needed. And both words fit into the same eschatological hope that expects physical, spiritual, and social wholeness.

It is on the other hand a further extension of the mission as *shalom* as this is expressive of the central expectation of salvation as it develops in the Old Testament—but it is an expectation that time and time again is fulfilled in part only in the succeeding events of Israel’s history.

It was indeed one of the major tasks of the prophets to defend the eschatological dimension of salvation from the desire of many to make it a thing of this world (cf. 1 K 1: 38), for the interest of the people and the future of the people (Is. 25: 8). Particularly in the case of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the question ‘What is *shalom*?’ is asked (Je. 24: 1; 14: 28; Ezk. 24: 8-16; also Mi. 3: 5f.). The false prophets did not proclaim peace as the final eschatological goal but as a present political possibility for Israel; they believed that all problems would be solved to the advantage of Israel so that they could live in a peace and prosperity guaranteed by Yahweh. They failed to see judgment in the present situation, and they were blind to the symbolism of the Greek or Christian hope of salvation, interpreting everything as material blessing for the present. When today people fail to read the message of judgment in the Old Testament, then the effect of the eschatological hope of *shalom* is that the significance of biblical eschatology, ‘the world’s destiny, to him who has hope, is an absolute future of peace. But this may not and cannot be anticipated, only more and more closely approximated’.

Together, these five strands form the Old Testament concept of *shalom*, with its two distinctive features—a positive breadth and inclusiveness together with an eschatological particularity. Both of these aspects find full light in the New Testament, but we are left until we arrive at that we must note the channels through which the New Testament received the Hebrew concept.

Shalom in Greek and rabbinic thought

The Septuagint uses more than twenty terms to translate *shalom*, but *eirēnē* is by far the most common; and inevitably the meaning of the more limited Greek word influenced their understanding of the Hebrew. It is the nearest equivalent in Greek, *eirēnē* meant, essentially, absence of war; it was seen as an interlude in an everlasting state of hostilities, and their more negative or passive concept of peace is reflected in the New Testament.

At the same time, the Pauline use of *shalom* as tranquility of mind (Rom. 15: 13). But by far the greater transforming influence is found in the rabbinic use of *shalom*. These concepts in particular affect the New Testament understanding of peace.

(i) The rabbinic emphasis is on peace as opposed to strife between individuals, rather than between nations. The absence of peace between individuals in society becomes an even greater danger than the absence of war. The New Testament is the love which should be seen between individual Christians in the church. Thus the distinctive New Testament concept of *agapē* takes on part of the area covered by *shalom* in the Old Testament.

(ii) Rabbinic literature develops the new idea of the relationship between man and God as being one of conflict and hostility. This enmity needs to become *shalom*. This new dimension injected into

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1 J. C. Hoekendijk, a former secretary of evangelism in the WCC, gives expression to the universalism typical of this approach to mission. ‘The passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ is for all men. Now the whole of mankind is delivered from bondage and brought into covenant relationship with the God of the New Man, Christ Jesus, every man has been made a member of the new mankind.’ The Church Inside Out (London, 1967) p. 19.

2 The use of *shalom* to denote bodily health and to refer to salvation are at times very closely integrated (e.g. Je. 34: 14). This is obviously due to the emphasis placed on the place of healing within the doctrine of salvation, a debate that coincides at several points with the socio-political questions which surround *shalom*.


5 J. A. F. Sawyer, op. cit., p. 88.

Shalom in Christian theology

Basically, we are justified in seeing the Old Testament concept of shalom as a legitimate expression of mission in the world because, apart from a slight readjustment of the boundaries of the word's meaning, eirēnē in the New Testament means what shalom means in the Old Testament.

In conclusion, as we relate this study to the modern missiological debate, two factors need emphasizing.

(i) Shalom is a Christological concept. The New Testament adds very little new content to shalom but does describe accurately its extent and location. Jesus Christ does not bring a new concept of peace; rather, he is shalom. Shalom is still 'a social happening, an event in inter-personal relations' but the necessary locus and centre of this is the relationship with God through Christ.

(ii) Shalom is a future eschatological hope, not a practical political possibility for the present. As the eschatological goal of our mission, shalom in all its aspects must be the model of our activity. It is the direction in which God is going; it must also be the concept which inspires our evangelistic, political and social activity. But if we replace our future eschatological hope with some mere political programme of the present we shall be false prophets in our generation. It is true that the social and political are as much part of shalom (and hence salvation) as the spiritual, but all alike are part of an eschatological expectation and therefore realizable only imperfectly in the here and now.

The meaning of man in the debate between Christianity and Marxism

Part 2

Andrew Kirk

The first part of this paper, published in the last issue of Themelios, studied the Christian/ Marxist debate and discussed the various facets of the Marxist view of man. Professor Kirk now goes on to outline a Christian critique of the Marxist view, and to suggest how the Christian church should relate its thought and practice to the Marxist challenge. A short list of the books which Professor Kirk has personally found most helpful in the study of Marxism is added as a guide for further study.

4. The Christian critique of Marxist anthropology

Before attempting an evaluation of the debate between Christianity and Marxism concerning man, it is necessary to set out some of those problems which the Christian faith believes that the doctrine of Marx and his followers cannot resolve.

Apart from the abysmal ignorance that Marxism has shown in its polemic against Christianity,19 somewhat improved as a result of the contemporary debate,20 there are various areas of Marxist thought and various premises and consequences of its theory and practice which a Christian is forced to question very deeply. Some of these criticisms, naturally, would be shared by non-Christian philosophers; others belong exclusively to the Christian faith.

Returning again to Marx's concept of man we can discover both similarities to and differences from Christian anthropology.

a. Similarities between Marxist and biblical anthropology

The similarities belong exclusively to the third and fourth stage of Marx's thought, as we developed it earlier. Man, according to the Bible, was created to work, to dominate the whole of creation. He is a creator in his own right, a labourer, an artist. The world was created, in part, for man. Man realizes himself, therefore, when he subjects it to his own design.

Moreover, the Bible agrees with Marx that a large part of man's alienation is manifested in man's domination of man through work: e.g. the Hebrews in Egypt (Ex. 1:1-14; 5:4-19); the prophetic condemnation of the impersonal buying and selling of wage labour (Is. 10:1, 2; 58:3, 4; Je. 8:10; 22:13-17; Am. 2:6, 7; 5:11, 12; Mic. 2:1, 2; the traditions of the law which 'bind heavy burdens hard to bear' (Mt. 23:4); James' condemnation of man's exploitation of man by means of unjust wages, etc. For his part, Paul considers that work is a means of service towards one's brother, never a means of acquiring power or influence (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 9:12-15; Phil. 4:14-18; 2 Thes. 3:11-13; Tit. 3:14).

Also man in the Bible is a historical being. The Old Testament understanding of God effectively demythologizes every kind of nature religion with its cyclical view of history.24 Abraham, for example, when he obeyed God, believing his promises, made history. He was responsible for a fundamental shift in world history. The biblical faith is also responsible for eradicating every kind of historical fatalism and determinism. Man, in collaboration with God, is the subject and not only the object of history. Moreover, resisting the strong influence of Greek thought, the Bible rejects the false dichotomy between two worlds, preferring to speak of the radical distinction which exists between two

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differently aged (e.g. Col. 1:13; Rom. 12:1, 2; Jn. 5:24).

b. Internal contradictions in the theoretical base of Marxist thought

The considerable similarities between certain aspects of Christian and Marxist anthropology ought to be further elaborated. These points of contact go to the very heart of the programme which is rich in possibilities. At the same time there exist certain very serious discrepancies.

One of the greatest difficulties which Marx had to face in his theoretical thought was how to give an adequate account of the fact that man is the subject of history. His difficulty lies in the fact that a strong dose of determinism seems to underlie his whole system of thought. For example, if the whole superstructure of human life (i.e., its values, systems, religion, political life, ideas, art, etc.) is the immediate consequence of man's economic situation and class-position in society, is not Marxian theory also part of this same superstructure and, therefore, equally conditioned? In other words, what has his work in Marx's thought (and he himself is unable to avoid its consequences for his own system) when he asserts that the superstructure changes with the material circumstances of life?

If actualization of the workers' movement is controlled by inflexible laws of history (whose discovery made Marx think that his analysis had somehow reached scientific status), then the revolution can no longer be an inflexible demand of the historical process (i.e., predetermined) in those countries where the capitalist system has been greatly modified in favour of the working class: it cannot be a moral requirement. From Marx's point of view, however, presuppose an idealist philosophy which he had already rejected in favour of dialectical materialism. In other words, according to Marx's most consistent thought, the activity of the object in the system of the subject can only be illegitimate to think of human history as a process which presupposes direction, purpose and progress. Moreover, man as the subject of his own history is really as much the product of the forces which exist in Marxism theory being a convincing explanation of 1. The cause of his unique consciousness. Marx does not give us any clue why man is capable of objectively reflecting upon nature, of which he forms a part. Indeed, on the basis of dialectical materialism, it would be extremely hard to find any theoretical way which was able to silence the suspicion and fear that man's world and history are absurd.

Thus, the difficulty with, its notable practical consequences, poses itself as the central problem of this Marxist system. Both the originality and the central force of Marx's thought lies in his transformation of Hegel, Feuerbach and the French utopian socialists into a complete materialism: every kind of sacrifice for the new social order. But, since the object has already determined his inaccessible direction. History, however, obstinately refuses to move in the direction which Marxist analysis has assigned for it, and so only moral indignation against the neglect of the principles of the original Marxist programme is left as a source of action. But moral

This pretentious scientific base. Fortunately, certain contemporary Marxists are prepared to question it, e.g., I. Sviatik, op. cit., p. 181. By such a hermeneutic interpretation of the State and Revolution, attempts to justify, over against 'orthodox' Marxists like K. Luxemburg 

Marx himself was not an exceptional scientist but a philosopher (his thesis for Jena University was written on a specific philosophical problem) and an exceptional social theorist whose description of the dialectical nature of history was closer to the facts than the observations of economists like Adam Smith and Ricardo.

The fact that many of his social-political statements have been proved false by the subsequent march of history tends to undermine a too precise claim to scientific verity which many use to support the actualization of their own particular acts.

The false understanding of how the scientific method works and what it sets out to achieve has had disastrous results in Communist societies; e.g., the medieval atitude to scientific investigation in Russia in the Stalin epoch, which still remains to this day as a certain drawbacks which scientific methods in Russia face today. Cf. among other authors, Mendel, 'The Causes of the Failure of the Russian Communist Social Experiment', p. 3; R. Conquest, op. cit., ch. VI; Girard, op. cit., p. 15.

It should be noted that Marx, because of the attention to the word 'history'. His theoretical base in dialectical materialism, however, does not permit such a hypostatization of the word 'history'. It is obvious that Marx's stress upon the dependence upon Hegel; cf. Berlin, op. cit., ch. 6; Eliahu, op. cit., p. 16, and the dualist tendency to eliminate progress from Marxist terminology, the whole system would disappear, . . . the constant dialectical overstep is what explains Marx's enlightenment.

indignation can never find its justification in mere historical analysis.

Another of Marx's great contradictions has to do with the relation between man and matter. This contradiction can be divided into two parts:

In point of fact the idea of man's perfectibility is more theological than scientific, a position of caution which is quite appropriate to the command which has come to it from outside. This idea, however, belongs rather to the Hegelian anti-revolutionary speculation that whatever is is the form of an enclosed historical process. No kind of sociological analysis, which claims to be scientific, could possibly furnish them.

Both the power and the weakness of Marx's thought reside in the fact that he himself is not a comprehensive factor as the most basic component of man's existence in society. The error lies in the fact that he abstracted one part of great humanity only one part of the world, which is the world. Marx is able to demonstrate a certain evolution, a certain progress in human history, but only at the cost of ignoring other facts. As Popper says, 'Marx shared the belief of many of his time in the law of progress. This naive historicism epistemically is superstitious. Progress is not a law of nature. The ground gained by one generation is the ground lost by the next' (Popper, op. cit., p. 385).

For, like all Marxists, he views the Marxist view of reality as a religion of the here and now, cf. A. Dumas, Ideologie y Fe (Montevideo, 1970), pp. 499. The first person who noted the first seeds of a fanatic faith in Marx's thought was Proudhon, who, in a letter written to Marx in Brussels in 1846, said the following: 'Kant and Marx are Marius and Masulli. I would not say intolerance, let us not rise up as the apostles of a new gospel against the irreconcilable and the old (as the gospel of science). It is only the biblical doctrine of creation which has rescued man from the alienation of cyclical history and every form of pantheism. From where then does Marx derive his idea of purpose in history? It could well be the product of his own scientific delusion.


For a magnificent tragic picture of meaningless, cf. the essay by A. Camus, 'The Myth of Sisypheus'. Marx, positively or negatively, is a man of the world, who is a typical sign of counter-revolutionary speculation. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Marx is wrong about dialectical materialism, to be able to give an account of the whole of life; cf. Schaff, op. cit., p. 92; (b) Marx's anthropological statements about man's being the conscious animal; (c) his statements about the consciousness of nature and the subject of historical investigation, are not based on philosophical speculations; they are not based on controlled scientific investigation, or else, they are based on a dialectical method a priori. Thus we have a method which it does not necessarily reflect any genuine reality, but only the position of the men of science in a dialectical contradiction. What is ultimately in play here is the dialectical method as an adequate method of knowing. It brings certain elements into play which are not at all considered in the more usual method an aprioristic, anti-scientific philosophy; cf. Girard, op. cit., p. 116-119; A. M. Scott, The Anatomy of Communism, p. 48.
different ages (e.g. Col. 1:13; Rom. 12: 2; 1 Jn. 5: 24).\textsuperscript{42}

b. Internal contradictions in the theoretical base of Marxist thought

The considerable similarities between certain aspects of Christian and Marxist anthropology ought to be further elaborated. These points of contact go to the very depths of a programme which is rich in possibilities. At the same time there exist certain very serious discrepancies.

One of the greatest difficulties which Marx had to face in his theoretical thought was how to give an adequate account of the fact that man is the subject of history. His difficulty lies in the fact that a strong dose of determinism seems to underlie his whole system of thought.\textsuperscript{43} For example, if the whole superstructure of human life (i.e., its value systems, religion, political life, ideas, art, etc.) is the immediate consequence of man's economic situation and class-position in society, is not Marxian theory also part of this same superstructure and, therefore, equally conditioned? In other words, how can his work on man fit in with Marx's thought (and he himself is unable to avoid its consequences for his own system) when he asserts that the superstructure changes with the material circumstances? If actually the whole movement of the workers' movement is controlled by inflexible laws of history (whose discovery made Marx think that his analysis had somehow reached scientific status),\textsuperscript{44} then the revolution can no longer be an inflexible demand of the historical process (i.e. predetermined) in those countries where the capitalist system has been greatly modified in favour of the working class: it can only be a moral requirement.\textsuperscript{45} Moral duties derive from Marx's point of view, however, presuppose an idealist philosophy which he had already rejected in favour of dialectical materialism. In other words, according to Marx's most consistent thought, the claim that man is free to achieve his end implies that he is incapable of transcendent norms would be unjust to be decided) but rather because it is destined by history to disappear.\textsuperscript{46}

This theoretical difficulty, with its notable practical consequences, poses itself as the central problem of the Marxian system. Both the originality and the central force of Marx's thought lies in his transformation of Hegel, Feuerbach and the French utopian socialists into a complete materialism: every kind of sacrifice for the new society is to be made on the basis of the idea that this new society is already determined by the present society, and that the whole of history has already determined history's irreversibly directional. History, however, obstinately refuses to move in the direction which Marxian analysis has assigned for it, and so only moral indignation against the injustices of the existing order remains.\textsuperscript{47} The precision of Marxism is the means of the overcoming of various antagonisms in interpersonal relationships. If the world did not begin in space and time, however, there can be no guarantee that one day it will arrive at some decisive moment, the end of its historical development. It is only the biblical doctrine of creation which has rescued man from the alienation of cyclical history and every form of pantheism. From where then does Marx derive his idea of purpose in history? It could be that he thought of a purpose in history.

\textsuperscript{42} This fact is determinative for the Christian's responsibility as a citizen in society. It can also help us to discern the true dimension of Marx's thought, a dimension which has always been overlooked by those who proceed from one particular collection of facts to the same unequivocal answers is a chimeria.

\textsuperscript{43} Cf. D. McLellan, 'The Thought of Karl Marx,' pp. 31, 36.

Concerning the so-called scientific status of Marxist theory we would like to make the following comments: (i) No scientific statement is valid unless it is in agreement with the scientific fact. Without a scientific method, cf. K. Popper, Conjectures and Refutations, p. 186, The Knowledge (London, 1960).

(ii) Marx himself was not an experimental scientist but a philosopher (his thesis for Jena University was written on a specific aspect of the philosophy of nature). But he did have a historical mentality. The principle of historical materialism which Marx had predicted in the context of a certain 'mode of production' and its development into a world war in order to gain power and his decision to withdraw from the First World War was very interesting. They are both aspects of the specific historical world which Marx has described on the basis of a 'populist' morality; cf. Mendelev, 'Marx and Engels: One of the facts was not to make the mistake of historical dialectical materialism. To be able to have an account of the whole of life, cf. Schaff, op. cit., p. 92; (b) Marx's anthropological statements about man's being the conscious being whatever to do with certain so-called historical stages, are precisely what is disturbing to Marxist theory. It should be well noted that Marx, because of the attempt at a depiction of the world of history: his theoretical base in dialectical materialism, however, does not permit such a hypothesis as Engels' famous words which stress the dependence upon Hegel; cf. Berlin, op. cit., ch. 6; Ehlers, Die Communistische Revolution in der Geschichte, p. 102.)

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\textsuperscript{46} Cf. Fank, op. cit., p. 48; Girard, op. cit., p. 181.

\textsuperscript{47} Too magnificently tragic picture of meanings, cf. the essay by A. Canus, 'The Myth of Sympathy', Marx and Engels, pp. 72-82. It is a sign of counter-revolutionary speculation. Nevertheless, however, a Marxist response to these demands, and dialectical materialism, to be able to have an account of the whole of life, cf. Schaff, op. cit., p. 92; (b) Marx's anthropological statements about man's being the conscious being whatever to do with certain so-called historical stages, are precisely what is disturbing to Marxist theory. It should be well noted that Marx, because of the attempt at a depiction of the world of history: his theoretical base in dialectical materialism, however, does not permit such a hypothesis as Engels' famous words which stress the dependence upon Hegel; cf. Berlin, op. cit., ch. 6; Ehlers, Die Communistische Revolution in der Geschichte, p. 102.)

\textsuperscript{48} Cf. Zhurik, op. cit. Marx' anthropological statements concerning man's being characterized and dialectical materialism: it does not necessarily reflect any genuine reality, but only a form, a moral or rational, i.e., a second-level, cultural contradiction. What is ultimately in play here is the dialectical method as a adequate method of knowing. It is not only a method of knowledge but also a method of interpretation which is an adequate method of knowing. It is not only a method of knowledge but also a method of interpretation which is an adequate method of knowing. It is not only a method of knowledge but also a method of interpretation which is an adequate method of knowing. It is not only a method of knowledge but also a method of interpretation which is an adequate method of knowing. It is not only a method of knowledge but also a method of interpretation which is an adequate method of knowing.

\textsuperscript{49} Both the power and the weakness of Marx's thought resides in the fact that he took economic factors as the most basic component of man's existence in society. The error lies in the fact that he abstracted one part of the social relationship from his world. Marx is able to demonstrate a certain evolution, a certain progress in human history, but only at the cost of ignoring other facts. As Popper says, 'Marx shared the belief of many of his time in the power of progress. This naive historicism is superstitious. Progress is not a law of nature. The ground gained by one must be lost by another.' (Popper, op. cit., p. 385)

\textsuperscript{45} The Marxist view of reality as a religion of the here and now, cf. A. Dumas, Ideologia y Fe (Montevideo, 1970), pp. 463. The first person who noted the first seeds of a fanatical faith in Marx's thought was Proudhon who, in a letter written to Marx in Brussels in 1846, said the following: 'Kant was a new Deity and Proudhon a新时代的宗教的理智主义, let us not rise up as the apostles of a new God or prophetic innovation but be one in the face of reason' (McLellan, The Thought of Karl Marx, p. 30).
c. Contradictions between the Marxist and biblical anthropologies

The most obvious similarities, as we have noted, belong to the third and fourth stage of Marx's anthropology; the discrepancies belong to the first and second stage.49

There is a sense in which Marx's objection to every kind of anthropological 'essentialism', on the grounds that man cannot be understood apart from his social circumstances and his social relationships, could also be defended from a biblical perspective.

The Bible, for example, never thinks of man as pure spirit. It recognizes that man is an essential part of creation and that his existence is inseparable (even in the resurrection) and it is good. Neither does it admit that man is irreducible apart from his own history (as is the case in existentialist philosophy, for example). It emphasizes that man is 'total' only when his relationships with his neighbour are just and pure (and individualism, in contrast to individuality, cannot be justified by biblical anthropology). Thus, God's plan for mankind's salvation is a new community, new man represented as new regeneratd nature in perfect social relationships.50 Man is an individual, but his significance as an individual cannot be isolated from his social relationships.51

The Bible, moreover, insists for another and even more fundamental reason. The notion that man is not an irreducible esse Man, recognizing that he is a creature, is truly man only in a complete relationship with the one who created him. The most basic biblical presupposition of all is that man owes his existence, his being, and the totality of his social relationships to an infinite and personal Creator. But it is precisely at this point, if not before, that Marxism and biblical theology of man differ. As the Mexican theologian J. P. Miranda says so succinctly, 'while the Bible recognizes the existence of God, Marx does not.'52

Finally, we will allude to the differences of opinion which centre on the subject of man's alienation.

Engels criticized Feuerbach for not having truly investigated the historical role of evil. (He could equally well have criticized Christianity for the same blindness.) Nevertheless, neither Engels nor Marx ever investigated its true origin, which would at the same time have revealed its true nature.

The appearance of alienation (a valuable way of describing the effects of evil) on the historical scene cannot be accounted for by reference to the un-historical and romantic supposition that there once existed primitive communities which enjoyed a historical and cultural freedom. Such communities existed, later becoming alienated for the first time when money (rather than goods) was introduced as the means of exchange, and when a subsequent accumulation of profit led to the fact that alienation is only the fruit of a particular system of relationships within a certain economic substructure, when the structure is changed the alienation is also altered.53

In its failure to get to the bottom of the problem of man's alienation Marxism has been driven, almost automatically, to adopt the totalitarian structures of total state intervention.54 One of the great weaknesses of Marxism is that it has built-in system of self-criticism.55 It represents a triumphalism even more ominous than that of some churches at their worst moments. Justification for failures is generally sought for in the evil inherent in capitalist—or in the internal enemy—the bourgeois attitudes of its own leaders. But it refuses to face the real reasons why they have arisen. Do not the celebrated cultural revolutions in China imply a tacit admission that Marx's system has not ended with the advent of the socialist society?

5. What shall be done?

Much of our discussion so far has been both intricate and disputed. In this concluding section I would like to attempt some personal thinking on some of the still outstanding subjects of debate.

The biblical understanding of man develops both the social and individual aspects of his alienation. It is vastly superior to Marx's concept because it takes account of the depths of his alienation. While Marx's historical determinations of this alienation with great power of penetration,56 he never hit upon its root cause. As a result he did not understand how this basic alienation could be eradicated from man.57 And it is on this point that the fact that alienation is only the fruit of a particular system of relationships within a certain economic substructure, when the structure is changed the alienation is also altered.58

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His insight, even in his earliest writings, is very strong. He thought that 'the idea of profit or exchange is the root of all the trouble'. He thought that the idea of profit and commodity, of property and human exploitation, leads much quicker than increase of population to a rift inside contemporary society that the old society is incapable of healing, because it never heals or creates, only establishes new forms of exploitation.62

According to Marx, alienation will cease when the conflict which underpins the system of profit, production, and when the proletariat administers the means of production in the name of its own class. 'Common ownership is the genuine solution of the antagonism between man and nature and between man and man.... It is the solution to the grief of both as it is the means itself to be this solution' (Early Texts, p. 148).

If the alienation does not automatically disappear as it is described in these terms, Marx could be accused of the point of view of unique biblical rhetoric, Lenin's 'sacred history'. More could be done, for example, to show the idealism preached by Marx, cf. the very opposite criticism by Lenski, 63 and the corresponding to his historical circumstances and thus makes him a concrete, real person.64 The debate about man takes place, therefore, according to the Marxist, between the two poles of philosophical speculation and scientific investigation. It is not too difficult to predict who will win!

But the Marxist statement of the epistemological problem is much too superficial. In the first place, it is unaware of the proper limits of the scientific method, of the philosophical and methodological independence of the terms of idealism versus dialectical materialism; it has already gone well beyond the limits of a true

Cf. my article 'La presencia y ausencia de Dios en la resurrección de su hija' (Cuestiones de Teología, II, 4, 1973, pp. 328-340); Moltmann, Man, ch. 4.

It is a difficult point. Paul of Tarsus, although he claims the right to the life of his brother, does not accept any responsibility for him. When Marx talks about man's alienation, he finds the root cause of it in the fact that '.. man, freed by force, FROM THE REST OF THE WRESTLE BEYOND, THAT MAN WILL ACCEPT THE RESPONSIBILITY TO BE OF GREATER MEANING TO WHAT MAN KNOWS'. It is theoretical contradiction the dynamics of man's history for domination over man. This is why it is permissible to call Marx's view of man romantic.

50 Marx y la Biblia (Salamanca, 1973), p. 316.

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59 C.f. Moltmann's criticism of Marxism quoted by Garry in From Anaesthesia to Dialogue, p. 61; and Damas, op. cit., p. 57.

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scientific method. Both idealism and materialism make reference to philosophical extrapolations which exceed the immediate competence of the scientific discipline. In this context, Marxism commits two basic methodological errors. (1) It shares the mistake of every humanism, when it claims that man's world is self-explanatory, being entirely knowable through scientific analysis alone. (2) It refuses to recognize that its own way of looking at things is in conflict with the method of philosophical theorizing. In the first case it ends up in an absurd reductionism; and in the second, it is blind to its own inevitably aprioristic approach to knowledge.

But Marxism epistemology, far from eliminating this philosophical debate, claims to provide a new revelation about man. Marx sincerely believed that on改革ing the idealism of Hegel and bringing Feuerbach's thought to earth, he had discovered the whole secret of man's evolution in society. It is for this reason that Marx is able to talk about an end to actual history for man. Whether he likes it or not, his concept of history, even if he projects it into a limitless future, implies a final and absolute state in man.

Methodologically, Marx confuses his own analysis of history (possessing strong and weak points like any other) with so-called historical laws which somehow authorize his own recognition by man. It was on the basis of this belief that he made his prediction of man's future into a simple question of the unravelling of scientific laws. It should not surprise us, therefore, that on account of a Marxist basis, for sooner or later a post-revolutionary society will have to decide between Marx's belief that a socialist state is fundamentally non-contradictory and Mao's theory of the eternal conflict of opposites.

Moreover, the tendency to freeze history and the appeal to an absolute truth is at the bottom of the polemic between the actual ideological position of Russia and her satellites and European revisionism (and, for slightly different reasons, the United States). But Marxism has no way of resolving the tension, not even by a fresh appeal to

118 K. Popper, Conjectures and Refutations.

Karl Popper has pinpointed the central dilemma of Marxism when he says that Marx's ethics was just another form of the positivist ethic of Hegel (there is no ethic save that which exists), the only difference being that he substitutes the future for the present. Summarizing, we would say that Marxism, from its very beginning, basically a collection of philosophical theories, which have helped to form the thought of a whole generation of philosophers, is an inadequate instrument to encompass the totality of man's existence. In practice, it tends to freeze history (confusing Communist society with the moment of eradication of all man's basic alienations) to some sort of a utopia which will correspond to an adequate ethical absolute. The ethical based on a permanent call from an absolute future (i.e., the ethic of the continuing revolution in the thought of Trotsky and Mao Tse-tung) is not adequate on a Marxist basis, for sooner or later a post-revolutionary society will have to decide between Marx's belief that a socialist state is fundamentally non-contradictory and Mao's theory of the eternal conflict of opposites.

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118 In general terms it is interesting to note that his first writings up to and including 1913 do not discuss philosophical issues. Then his political works began to appear, including his famous defence of the social revolution against the attacks of The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1852). Finally he published his famous studies on economics, The Critique of Political Economic (1859), The Grundrisse (1857-58), perhaps his most complete work, including his whole materialist conception of history, and finally, exceptions to this scheme. Nevertheless, the order philosophy, politics, economics is highly suggestive for an interpretation of Marx. 2. Karl Marx's writings, for no form of 'historicism' can be made the base for ethical decision.

We need to assess one further important aspect of Marxism. It is well resumed for us in the second thesis which commits from the moment objective truth can be attributed to human thought is not a question of theory but of practice. In practice, man must prove the truth, the reality and the power of his thought. So stated, the thesis has a fundamental meaning, that is, it is in agreement with the apostolic insistence that the practical results of faith are the only proof of the genuineness of the profession (e.g., Eph. 4: 17-21; 1 Jn. 2: 6, 9; 3: 18-20). At the same time we have the right to demand that contemporary Marxism submits itself to the same principle. To judge capitalism, for example, by its practical consequences and Marxism only by its ideas is neither just nor in agreement with the latter's theoretical basis. Nor is it just when today's errors on the basis of the inevitable development of tomorrow's history admissible, when the former arises only out of the truth or otherwise of today's practice.

The principle of the priority of praxis over theory, however, is usually formulated in another way in certain new theological movements (e.g., 'the theology of liberation' in Latin America today) in the following way. It is unjust (or irrational) to criticize concrete socialist projects from an a priori position, without at the same time having a specific political commitment. Criticism cannot be launched from an abstract theoretical context, for example, it is useless in Latin America), because the practical results of Christianity have already been judged in this context. Any kind of criticism of socialism outside of a practical commitment to the construction of a new society cannot be separated from political commitment in one form or another. Put in rather a different way, theological reflection is only meaningful on the basis of a previously held ideology of practice. The only valid criticism of concrete projects is that which comes in the course of a common commitment.

This argument would seem to be very well grounded. But in fact it suffers from various con
centrations, as all totally formal because the gospel cannot be separated from political commitment in one form or another. Put in rather a different way, theological reflection is only meaningful on the basis of a previously held ideology of practice. The only valid criticism of concrete projects is that which comes in the course of a common commitment.

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(1) In the first place, Christianity does not depend for its source of truth either on its praxis or on a particular historical-political analysis. The prophetic and apostolic message of the Bible which concerns the one who is the true human and who, in the believer walks in truth, issues out of a previous word of God which is irreducibile. So the practice of human justice, for example, only makes sense, in the last analysis, in the light of the one who makes the truth and who is the truth. The 'righteousness of God', however (dikaiosynon Theou), is of a different order from the formalist concept of justice, whether this latter is intrinsic to the world (Marx), or extrinsic (Kant). Rather, it is the outcome of a new man. It includes, as a constitutive part, the free justification of the sinner through faith in the finished reconciling work of Jesus Christ (Lk. 18: 9-14; Rom. 3: 21-26). In other words, a full understanding of truth is only possible when both practice and faith are in line with truth. And the truth of revelation, because it depends upon God who reveals, is objectively true independently of whether it is believed and acted upon by man or not. Nevertheless, the genuineness of revelation is an essential part of this revelation, just because it demands a consistent practice, will be judged by that practice and not simply on the basis of a profession of faith (the meaning of faith and practice is not the same). In other words, it is clear that revelation can also be evaluated according to the theoretical answers it gives, even prior to its being put into practice.

(2) In the second place, the decision to commit oneself, in this case, to a particular political programme, if one is going to avoid a mere pragmatism and activism, demands a responsible theoretical analysis of the programme before one acts. This is especially true if one believes it is possible to reject the absolute claim of politics and decide the correct responses to all man's problems. It is precisely those who have denied the legitimacy of a previous criticism of available options, based on coherent ethical principles which transcend these programmes, who are, as we have discussed and if necessary refruted), who have finished up by elevating political praxis into the source of these principles and as a result justifying any kind of political practice. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that one can even commit oneself to a political position without knowing it and evaluating it beforehand. Even the act of commitment requires a choice which, if it is to be responsible, implies an a priori moral decision. A Christian, especially, ought to be very careful not to be deceived by carefully directed ideological
scientific method. Both idealism and materialism make reference to philosophical extrapolations which exceed the immediate competence of the scientific discipline. In this context, Marxism commits two basic methodological errors. (1) It shares the mistake of every humanism, when it claims that man's world is self-explanatory, being entirely knowable through scientific analysis alone. (2) It refuses to recognize that its own way of looking at things is in conflict with the philosophy of philosophical theorizing. In the first case it ends up in an absurd reductionism; and in the second, it is blind to its own inevitably aprioristic approach to knowledge.

But Marxist epistemology, far from eliminating this philosophical debate, claims to provide a new revelation about man. Marx sincerely believed that on refuting the idealism of Hegel and bringing Feuerbach to earth, he had discovered the whole secret of man's evolution in society. It is for this reason that Marx is able to talk about an end to actual history for man. Whether he likes it or not, his concept of history, even if it projects it into a limitless future, implies a final and absolute state in man.

Methodologically, Marx confuses his own analysis of history (possessing strong and weak points like any other) with so-called historical laws which somehow transcend our understanding of history by man. It was on the basis of this belief that he made his prediction of man's future into a simple question of the unravelling of scientific laws. It should not surprise us, therefore, that on account of this methodological confusion, what has been partially fulfilled has not been due to any of his "inesorable laws of development" nor to his historical stages, through which it is necessary to pass. What ought to surprise us, however, is that the Marxist method of reasoning, which is not the result of the scientific method, which functions with rigorous experimental controls, with a humanistic mysticism which arises out of an unconditional faith in man's progress.

Karl Popper has pinpointed the central dilemma of Marxism when he says that Marx's ethic was just another form of the positivist ethic of Hegel (there is no ethic save that which exists), the only difference being that he substitutes the future for the present.

Summarizing, we would say that Marxism, from its very beginning, basically a collection of philosophical theories, which have helped to shape a new humanism, is in conflict with the industrial society which is highly suggestive. Nevertheless, this analysis, like any other, is subject to verification or falsification according to man's subsequent development in society and must submit to the test of objective reality. The point is that at the same time we have the right to demand that contemporary Marxism submits itself to the same principle. To judge capitalism, for example, by its practical consequences and Marxism only by its theory is neither just nor in agreement with the latter's theoretical basis. Nor is it justified to avoid the apologetic insistence that the practical results of faith are the only proof of the genuineness of the profession (e.g., Eph. 4: 17-21; 1 Jn. 2: 6, 9; 3: 14-20). That is why it is only the future which will judge whether the 'righteousness of God' (however dikaiosune Theou), is of a different order from the formalist concept of justice, whether this latter is intrinsic to the world (Marx), or extrinsic (Kant). Rather Marxism proposes the setting aside of a new man. It includes, as a constitutive part, the free justification of the sinner through faith in the finished reconciling work of Jesus Christ (Lk. 18: 9-14; Rom. 3: 21-26). In other words, a full realisation of truth can only come when truth is in the full revelation of God.

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This argument would seem to be very well grounded. But in fact it suffers from various concrete and powerful criticisms, not the least an inevitable effect in similar tactical errors committed by the church, particularly in Latin America.

En. J. I. Segundo, Maor y Minorias en la Dialéctica Divina de la Liberación (Buenos Aires, 1973), pp. 79f.; J. Miguel Bonino, Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age (London, 1975). (1) In the first place, Christianity does not depend for its source of truth either on its praxis or on a particular historical-political analysis. The prophetic and apostolic message of the Bible which consists of truth is an objective witness. Whatever the believer walks in truth, issues out of a previous word of God which is irredicable. So the practice of human justice, for example, only makes sense, in the last analysis, in the light of the one who makes it. Further, the act of faith is not some kind of truth-position, but is full revelation of God. The 'righteousness of God', however dikaiosune Theou, is of a different order from the formalist concept of justice, whether this latter is intrinsic to the world (Marx), or extrinsic (Kant). Rather Marxism proposes the setting aside of a new man. It includes, as a constitutive part, the free justification of the sinner through faith in the finished reconciling work of Jesus Christ (Lk. 18: 9-14; Rom. 3: 21-26). In other words, a full realisation of truth can only come when truth is in the full revelation of God. And the truth of revelation, because it depends upon God who reveals, is objectively true independently of whether it is believed and acted upon by man or not. Nevertheless, the genuineness of revelation is not itself a criterion, just because it demands a consistent practice, will be judged by that practice and not simply on the basis of a profession of belief (the meaning of faith and justification by faith). Revelation is that which cannot be separated from political commitment in one form or another. Put in rather a different way, theological reflection is only meaningful on the basis of a previously held ideology of practice. The one-sided criticism of concrete projects is that which comes in the course of a common commitment.

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propaganda, from wherever it may come.

(3) In the third place, it is, of course, abundantly true that the gospel cannot and should not be divorced from and independent of political commitment. It is also true that certain political commitments better express the essential content of the gospel than others. But whether or not they do so express the gospel has to be decided by the gospel, and not by an a priori and purely psychological analysis. In other words the gospel poses its own political programme,118 which is based on its own analysis of the global reality of man. The 'ideological' pre-understanding, or hermeneutical key, of that programme is the extraordinarily rich and highly original biblical message of 'the kingdom of God'.

The theology which the church undertakes does not depend (in the sense of sharing their presuppositions) on a purely sociological or psychological programme which claims an existence independent of the judgment of the Word of God. In fact, the idea that biblical exegesis has to work with an ideological or philosophical pre-understanding (Vorannahme) is due principally to the drastic change in man's world view which took place at the time of the Enlightenment. In other words, it is based on man's desired autonomy in the universe which leads him, because he rejects the idea of a personal creation by God, to approach the biblical text within the context of his rationalistic presuppositions.

We believe that the authentic Christian reply to the whole latent challenge of Marxism and its basic epistemology and therefore to the false dichotomy between the principles of the Christian gospel (which are based of course on the presupposition of man's created nature) can itself be expressed by a systematic and coherent analysis of the biblical text within the context of his rationalistic presuppositions.

(1) Biblical realism is a great iconoclast against every kind of idol. An idol can be defined in modern terms as any kind of system of thought, which also leads to action, which is based on the philosophical presupposition that man is autonomous in the universe. Biblical faith then is needed to 'de-idealize' or de-mythologize that system when it exceeds the limits of a strict scientific methodology and converts itself into a total world view.

Marxism can demonstrate its very considerable contribution to human knowledge and to the practice of liberation only when it has passed through a process of radical demythification. When that has happened, it is no longer true of Marx that his thought does not consistently depend upon the false aspects of its anthropological base, but respond to a genuine understanding of man's situation in the universe, may be more clearly manifested.

We believe, e.g., that the singularly unique position of the Marxists as an 'engine of God's historical project', which is nothing less than the kingdom inaugurated by Jesus Christ. The action which is demanded of Christians, either individually or collectively, will, I believe, involve, amongst other things: (1) the establishment of justice (dependent for its content exclusively on God's character) at every level of society and down to the smallest detail as the greatest moral impera-

propaganda, from wherever it may come.

(3) In the third place, it is, of course, abundantly true that the gospel cannot and should not be divorced from all political commitment. It is also true that certain political commitments better express the essential content of the gospel than others. But whether or not they do so express the gospel has to be decided by the gospel, and not by an assumption of some sociological or psychological analysis. In other words the gospel presents its own political programme,119 which is based on its own analysis of the global reality of man. The 'ideological' pro-understanding, or hermeneutical key, of that programme is extremely rich and highly original biblical message of 'the kingdom of God'.

The theology which the church undertakes does not depend (in the sense of sharing their presuppositions) on any socio-political ideology which claims an existence independent of the judgment of the Word of God. In fact, the idea that biblical exegesis has to work with an ideological or philosophical pro-understanding (Vorverständnis) is due principally to the drastic change in man's world view which took place at the time of the Enlightenment. In other words, it is based on man's desired autonomy in the universe which leads him, because he rejects the idea of a personal creation by God, to the approach of Bible interpretation as a biblical text within the context of his rationalistic presuppositions.

We believe that the authentic Christian reply to the whole latent challenge of Marxism and its basic epistemology and its false dichotomy between ideology and materialism, between theory and practice and between historical stagnation and humanism (humanitarianism) is biblical realism.

(i) Biblical realism is a great iconoclast against every kind of idol. An idol can be defined in modern terms as any kind of system of thought, which also leads to action, which is based on the philosophical supposition that man is autonomous in the universe. Biblical faith then is needed to 'de-idealize' or de-mythologize that system when it exceeds the limits of a strict scientific methodology and converts itself into a total world view.

Marxism can demonstrate its very considerable contribution to human knowledge and to the practice of liberation only when it has passed through a process of radical demythification. When this has happened, its many strong points, which do not consistently depend upon the false aspects of its anthropological base, but respond to a genuine understanding of man's situation in the universe, may be more clearly manifested.

The trouble with some reflections on the God's historical progress, which is nothing less than the kingdom inaugurated by Jesus Christ. The action which is demanded of Christians, either individually or collectively, will, I believe, involve, amongst other things: (1) the establishment of justice (dependent for its content exclusively upon God's character) at every level of society and down to the smallest detail as the greatest moral impera-tive in the field of social responsibility; (2) solidarity, even if it involves conflict and suffering, with every oppressed person, group and class (whether oppressed by man, nature, disease or their own sin), struggling alongside them to fulfil their legitimate needs and expectations, and at the same time carrying with them the unique message of the gospel which freely offers complete liberation; (3) a contribution to the maturing of new communities of faith so that they may reflect something of the fullness of life in the kingdom; one of the main objectives of the church, which has always attempted to engage in the work of Christ will be a total abolition in the new communities of any distinction based on the pretended superiority of some people (due to cultural background, race, sex, etc.) over others (by such systems of social rule such as the family and the state) or the building up of new structures based on the 'de-ideologised' substance of the gospel. Some of the areas in which this work may be possible are the following: jurisprudence, politics, architecture, applied sciences, journalism and literature in general.

The purpose of Marx's book The German Ideology, as he later explained, was 'to settle arguments about the philosophical status of social sciences'. Certainly part of the conscious purpose of this study has been to try to set accounts, from a biblical Christian perspective, with the profound and lasting challenge of Karl Heinrich Marx. We trust that at the same time it will be of some value to other Christians who likewise have felt perplexed in the face of the overwhelming plausibility of Marx thought and the almost non-existent replies from the Christian side.


Bibliography

Texts


Tucker contains a good selection of the early writings; the main work missing in Engels' The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. This is not to be found in Feuer either, though it does contain a good selection of Engels' letters as well as excerpts from the main works of both founders of Communism. Mendel includes the principal works of Lenin, Stalin, Mao Tse-tung; it was published too early to include anything by another revolutionary theorist, Che Guevara.

Commentaries
Otto V. Baumstein et al., Manual of Marxist-Leninism. One of the classic expositions by a group of Soviet theorists. It is very faithful to the original thought of Marx and Engels, and serves Lenin as a consistent interpreter of Marx's thought.


David McLellan, The Thought of Karl Marx: an Introduction (London: Macmillan, 1971). Also the source of a massive biography, published in 1973. He manages an eminently objective in this introductory account of the main lines of Marx's thought. His approach is both historical (an outline of the principal writings, undertaken department by department), and ideological (the ideological method). There are ample quotations to back his exposition.

Nicholas Brebner, The Russian Revolution (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966); together with his The Origin of Russian Communism (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1953). Both books deal with the dynamics of Marxist socialism when converted into practice. One of Berkman's strengths is his non-bureaucratic criticism of capitalist exploitation and his sympathy for some kind of socialism.

Eric Fromm et al., Socialists Humanist (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963). Another non-bureaucratic critique of the Marxian orthodoxy of the present day in all its forms of expression.