Sociological Versus Theological Pluralism:
Evaluating "A Common Word"

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It has been 25 years since Os Guinness exhorted Evangelicals to become more sophisticated in analyzing and addressing social and cultural issues. "The chances of Christians developing a feel for the social dimension of belief and acquiring a new tool for cultural analysis are extremely small," he noted in 1983. "They have no skill in contemporary cultural comment."[1] The situation with Evangelical Christians has not improved during the last quarter of a century, as any knowledgeable observer would be able to see when confronted with the confusion that exists on the part of believers regarding the interface between New Testament faith and the various cultural and religious patterns of the modern world.

Missionaries, of course, are *constantly* faced with issues of cultural evaluation, critique, adaptation and contextualization. They are, to be sure, products of their various backgrounds and upbringings, along with their education and life experiences. If the combination of these items has not equipped them to deal constructively with the sociology of their respective situations, they will be just as hard pressed to make Biblical decisions regarding cultural issues as are regular citizens.

Let me suggest one area in which we could perhaps begin to make progress commensurate with Guinness' suggestions; that of *pluralism.* In theological—and, in particular, missiological—contexts, "pluralism" in its most common usage implies that there exist multiple "paths to God," each of which is valid in the sense of providing "salvation" to a specific group of people. Conservative Evangelicals almost invariably view the concept negatively, since their reading of the New Testament highlights such passages as Acts 4:12—*"salvation is found in no one else [but Jesus Christ] for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved"*—a passage that would seem to represent the antithesis of pluralism. But if we take to heart Guinness' exhortations to attain an increased level of sophistication in our thinking and judgments, the way of Wisdom would require us to distinguish between two different kinds of pluralism. I will designate these as *"sociological pluralism"* and *"theological pluralism."*

"Sociological Pluralism"

Sociological pluralism involves the creation and maintenance of an "open playing field" with respect to the diversity of religious truth-claims that are extant in any given multi-cultural situation in today's world. It is recognized that there are several religions and philosophies circulating among various people groups in any and all global contexts. Any attempt to politically or judicially legislate from "the top downward" a requirement that all members of a people-group adhere to any single option would meet with explosive resistance.

Protestant Evangelicals are particularly averse to any attempts at limiting religious expression because of their conviction that the Bible teaches that true conversion does not consist of an external, institutionally-oriented change of allegiance to an alternative set of religious beliefs and practices. Such items *could*

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indeed be forced upon an individual, but the New Testament concept of conversion involves an internal and personal transformation—a "rebirth of the spirit"—that cannot be induced in humans by any external means.

At least partly as a consequence of this conviction, democratic political systems have generally been characterized by an inbuilt sociological pluralism. In the West, for instance, the United States has historically taken the Jeffersonian position that truth will always stand out for itself, and consequently any and all theological, philosophical, or ideological proponents are to be allowed to enter "the open playing field" and make their claims. In creating the first nation in history with a constitutionally mandated separation of Church and State, the

founding fathers sought to *protect* religious beliefs by "walling them off" from governmental interference. Sociological pluralism, then,may be seen as one of the greatest advances in human history.

Historically speaking, advocates of sociological pluralism have had to contend with only a single major problem, that of the moral and ethical limitations inherent in the concept as it is most often applied. At what point, for instance, does a civil government have the responsibility to outlaw specific religious practices that may be deemed by the majority to be harmful to individuals? Can a society condone an *absolute* sociological pluralism if such would permit the adherents of specific religious systems to indulge, for instance, in incest, temple prostitution, forced female circumcision, animal abuse, or the disallowance of physicians and/or pharmaceuticals in the event of illnesses, to name but a few items? On what basis should limitations be set, and who should determine them?

"Theological Pluralism"

Theological pluralism holds that every religious system is to be accepted as a valid means of approaching God in whatever form one may conceptualize Him/Her/It. This form of pluralism denies that any one religious system has a corner on truth and disallows the preference of any particular religion above all others.

Theological pluralism, however, encounters at least two significant problems. There is first what may be termed the *revelational* problem. Many of the world's religions are exclusivistic with respect to their truth claims due to the inscripturated precepts of their systems of theology and praxis. Problems with such systems arise in this manner: if a passage such as Acts 4:12 (see above) is believed

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not to have been revealed by God, then other exclusivistic passages—and indeed, all scriptural texts—immediately become suspect as well. It is impossible to consistently hold the position that one's canon is divinely inspired if certain precepts contained within that canon (i.e., exclusivity) are held to be mistaken.

Secondly, there is the problem of *conflicting truth claims*. Theological pluralism holds that the doctrinal beliefs and ritual practices of all the major religions are equally valid. But such a contention is logically impossible. One cannot, for instance, hold that Jesus was the *"only begotten son of God"* (John 3:16), and at the same time contend that *"it is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son"* (Surah 19:35). It cannot be that Jesus *"himself bore our sins in his body on the tree…"* (1 Peter 2:24), and at the same time be true that *"no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another"* (Surah 53:38). It cannot be that *"no one who denies the Son has the Father"* (1 John 2:23), and at the same time be true that the adherents of Islam are able to deny

the Sonship of Christ and yet be considered as having a relationship with the Father. In each of these cases, it is logically possible for one tenet to be true and the other false, or for both tenets to be false, but it is *not* possible for both to be true.

With the above distinction between sociological and theological pluralism in mind, let us examine two contemporary documents that many consider exemplary of religious pluralism.

"A Common Word Between Us and You"

In September of 2007, 138 Muslim scholars and clergymen issued a joint response to Pope Benedict XVI's Regensburg address of 2006, a speech which had angered adherents of Islam the world over. The Muslim document was entitled "A Common Word Between Us and You" and was designed to promote "open intellectual exchange and mutual understanding" between the world's Christian and Muslim communities.[2] Essentially, the document claims that a basis for peace and understanding between Christianity and Islam consists in the fact that "the Unity of God, love of Him, and love of the Neighbor form a common ground upon which Islam and Christianity (and Judaism) are founded." The authors believe that the Muslim *shahadah* (*"There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger"*) together with one of Islam's historic traditions (*"None of you has faith until you love for your neighbor what you love for yourself"*) are the Islamic equivalents of Christianity's two greatest commandments (*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength"* and *"[love] your neighbor as yourself"*). On the basis of these alleged commonalities between the faiths, the Muslim authors call for a new day in Christian-Muslim relations: *"Let our differences not cause hatred and strife between us. Let us vie with each other only in righteousness and good works. Let us respect each other, be fair, just, and kind to [one] another and live in sincere peace, harmony, and mutual goodwill."*

The authors of "A Common Word" claim that "through inspiration" Mu-

hammad was actually repeating the Bible's first and greatest commandment, and he thus "brought nothing fundamentally or essentially new" to humankind. Muslims, Christians and Jews should all be "free to follow what God commanded them, and not have to prostrate before kings and the like." Christians are assured that neither the authors nor the adherents of Islam in general are against them, as long as the Christian community does not wage war against or oppress Muslims. Islam recognizes Jesus as the Messiah; Muslims are therefore *with* Christians, not against them.

Responses to this invitation included a letter penned by scholars from Yale Divinity School's Center for Faith and Culture. "Loving God and Neighbor Together" was published in the *New York Times* together with the names of 135 Christians—including several Evangelical scholars, pastors, and missionary statesmen—who endorsed the sentiments expressed therein.

"Loving God and Neighbor Together" begins with an apology for the Crusades and for "the overzealousness of the present war on terror." The Christian authors were impressed by the Muslims' declarations and sentiments as may be inferred

ther of the documents is helpful, since most of the essentials of Christianity were sacrificed in order to speak of "the love of God and neighbor" in the manner that the proponents have done.[3] Critiques from other sources have been forthcoming as well.

Some of these criticisms raise important points which should be considered. At the same time, those who have experienced the immense frustration of consistent failure to gain and maintain contacts with Muslims are understandably optimistic and even excited when such opportunities present themselves. It would surely have eliminated a great deal of the criticism, however, if the signatories of "Loving God and Neighbor" had been able to declare themselves proponents and advocates of *sociological pluralism* in contrast to *theological pluralism*.

"A Common Word" and "Loving God and Neighbor"—A Sociological Evaluation

As *sociological* pluralists Christians can legitimately welcome an invitation from Muslims to discuss what the latter consider to be commonalities "between us and them," just as Jesus accepted invitations from people as disparate as prominent Jewish leaders and tax

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from their statement "that *so much* common ground exists—common ground in some of the fundamentals of faith—gives hope that undeniable differences and even the very real external pressures that bear down upon us cannot overshadow the common ground upon which we stand together."

Many of the Christian signatories of "Loving God and Neighbor Together" have been criticized for their alleged naivete in endorsing "A Common Word." Noted Evangelical pastor and author John Piper recorded his critique on YouTube, speaking of the "dishonesty" of those who signed. Piper insists that nei-

collectors to dine in their homes (Luke 11:37, 14:1; Matthew 9:10; Luke 19:1-5). Christians can champion the Muslims' desire to come out onto "the open playing field" and declare their beliefs to others. They can agree that since together Muslims and Christians make up more than 55% of the world's population, "if [they] are not at peace, the world cannot be at peace." They can acknowledge that the Muslim authors of "A Common Word" are to be commended for their desire that the world know and practice the "love of God" and "the love of neighbor."

Seen from the perspective of *sociologi-*

cal pluralism, then, "A Common Word" sets the stage for discussion and dialogue regarding some very fundamental aspects of the Christian faith. Who is this God that we are to love? What exactly do we mean by His Oneness? Where does the historical figure of Jesus Christ as understood by Christians fit into the scheme of things? Once we have discussed such foundational issues, we can then proceed to the question of *how* we are to love God. While we may agree that both Christians and Muslims are worshiping the One True God, a more fundamental issue is whether our respective worship is *acceptable* to Him. The prophet Isaiah, for instance, makes it clear that one can be worshiping the "right" God in the "right" ways, but this worship may be completely *unacceptable* if one's inner being is not in conformity with what God requires of humans who seek to approach Him (see Isaiah 1:11-17).

"A Common Word" and "Loving God and Neighbor"—A Theological Evaluation

As persons who realize the impossibility of a consistent theological pluralism, however, Christian respondents should be seeking to communicate at every level the Biblically-based tenets of the historic Christian faith. They may, as the Apostle Paul did so well in his message to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Athens, emphasize the apparent "commonalities" between religious systems as a starting point for discussion: "I see that you are very religious;" "What you are already worshiping as unknown;" "The God who made from one all nations of men;" "He is not far from any of us;" "In Him we live and move and have our being;" "We are also His offspring" (Acts 17:22-23, 28).

But as Paul continued his proclamation, it became necessary for him to make statements that were decidedly *non*-pluralistic: *"What you and people like you have been doing is ignorance;" "Overlooked in the past, but no longer; now you must repent of that ignorance;" "God has fixed a day for judgment, through a Man, the authority of which He has attested by raising that Man from the dead"* (Acts 17:30-31). These aspects of the Mars Hill sermon had no ecumenical "softness"

or pluralistic "niceness." There is an unavoidable "sting" to the Gospel. And therefore, *"when they heard about the resurrection, some sneered…"* (Acts 17:32).

Christians who speak of Biblical truths to Muslims can expect a similar result. We may talk about "a common word between us and them" as a *preface*, as a means of generating a discussion. But at some point we will find it necessary to introduce the unpalatable parts of our Gospel in order to be true to the commandment of Jesus to *"teach them to obey all that I have commanded you…"* (Matthew 28:20).

What are the points of *"all that Jesus commanded us"* that make it impossible for us to accept "A Common Word Between Us and You" as a credible statement of theological pluralism? There are several issues that may be raised with respect to this document, three of which are particularly significant.

1. Concerning "Unity, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor." First, does "the

is said by the authors to be indicative of no more than the need to acknowledge the Oneness of God. But traditionally this passage has been used to condemn *shirk*, arguably the greatest sin in Islam. *Shirk* is a denial of *tawhid*—the absolute Oneness of God—and for 1400 years the Christian doctrine of the Trinity has been considered to be a form of *shirk*. In the eyes of a majority of Muslims, Trinitarianism is a limited polytheism, condemned by the Qur'an in such passages as Surah 5:73:*"They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity, for there is no god except One God. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them."*

"A Common Word" admits that "Muslims recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah, [though] not in the same way Christians do…" A small portion of Surah 4:171 is then cited in a very accommodating fashion. But this passage in its entirety is an exhortation to the "People of

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unity of God, the necessity of love for Him, and the necessity of love of the neighbor" truly comprise an essential "common ground" between Christianity and Islam? When Christians speak of "the unity of God," do they mean what Muslims historically have meant by this phrase? Are the Muslim authors of "A Common Word" reflecting the historic *Muslim* view of this concept?

The text of the document states that "the words: He hath no associate, remind Muslims that they must love God uniquely, without rivals within their souls…"[4] These words are from a *hadith*—a tradition—and consequently carry less weight for most Muslims than would a Quranic citation. But further on in the same paragraph there is a quotation from Surah 3:64, which forbids the ascribing of partners to God. This verse

the Book" (i.e., Jews, Christians, and Muslims) to *"commit no excesses in your religion; nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary…Say not "Trinity:" desist; it will be better for you; for Allah is One God…(Far Exalted is He) above having a son."* Orthodox Christianity can give no approval whatsoever to this passage, since it directly denies the doctrines of the Trinity and the sonship of Jesus, and by implication rejects His deity and incarnation as well.

With respect to "love of God," the Muslim document makes it clear that the adherents of Islam are commanded to "love God uniquely." They are forbidden to love any "associate" of God, citing Surah 2:165: *"Yet there are men who take rivals unto God: they love them as they*

should love God." Traditionally this is yet another passage which has been interpreted as a rejection of Trinitarianism. The Christian view of Jesus as a member of the Godhead makes Him an "associate" of God, about which Surah 5:116 presents the following: *"Allah will say, 'O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, 'worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah?' He will say: 'Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right to say."*

In the New Testament, however, Jesus accepted the confession of Peter that He was *"the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Matt. 16:16). He accepted the worship of the women after His resurrection (Matthew 28:9), of Thomas who called Him *"Lord"* and *"God"* (John 20:28), and of his disciples on the Mount of Olives prior to His ascension (Matthew 28:17). No orthodox Muslim can give credence to these accounts, and no orthodox Christian can deny them.

2. Muhammad's "Inspiration." Was the text of the Qur'an received by Muhammad "through inspiration," and were his words in actuality "re-stating the Bible's first commandment" as "A Common Word" claims? Our answer to the second of these questions would be in the negative. Since the Muslims in their document have chosen to stress the absolute Oneness of the God who is to be loved to the exclusion of all associates, and since they have historically viewed the Christian belief in the Triune God as "attributing partners" to Him, Christians who *"love the Lord their God"* cannot be said to be worshiping with the same mental constructs of the Deity as Muslims possess.

Followers of Christ have historically denied that Muhammad spoke "under inspiration" of God. For the Church, inscripturated revelation ended with the letters and the Revelation of the Apostle John in the closing years of the first century CE. The Bible in its present form was ratified by Christendom at the end of the fourth century. No additional scripture has been revealed, meaning that Muhammad's words may not be seen as such. Indeed, the historic view of Christians has been that because Muhammad's teachings deviate so widely from the canonical writings of both Israel (i.e., the Old Testament) and the Church (i.e., the New Testament), his "revelations" must be included in the genre of teachings about which the Apostle Paul gave such stern warnings in Galatians 1:8.

In addition, the commands to "love God" and "love one's neighbor" taken by themselves fall far short of the full range of New Testament requirements for the salvation of human beings. The New Testament requires that one *"confess that Jesus is Lord,"* and that one *"believe that God has raised Him from the dead"* (Romans 10:9). This passage is in actuality the *true "shahadah"* of the New Testament Christian. But for Muslims, Jesus is neither Lord nor has He been raised from the dead. Con-

revealed. So while it may be claimed that Muhammad brought nothing that had not been revealed before, a Muslim must hold that what Muhammad taught was indeed "new" to the people of his time, since they claim that no one had access to uncorrupted revelation.

"A Common Word" insists that because they are all considered "People of the Book," "Muslims, Christians, and Jews should be free to follow what God commanded them, and not have to prostrate before kings and the like." Here the authors cite the command of Sura 2:256 that *"there is to be no compulsion in religion."* They also cite Mark 9:40 and Luke 9:50: *"For he who is not against us is on our side"*—and on that basis in-

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sequently, they can know nothing of the salvation that is available in Christ. It is admittedly possible in an external sense to *appear* to "love God and neighbor" in ways that may be culturally sanctioned and even applauded. But Jesus warned that a person can *"preach in His name,"* *"cast out demons in His name,"* and even *"perform miracles in His name"*—and still be considered an "evildoer" (Matthew 7:22-23).

3. Nothing New? If, as "A Common Word" claims, "God confirms in the Qur'an that Muhammad brought nothing fundamentally or essentially new," we would ask why Islam ever arose as a new and competitive world religion. The Muslim signatories cite Surah 46:9 in support of this contention, a verse in which Muhammad claimed that he was *"…no bringer of new-fangled doctrine among the messengers…"* But Muslims have always contended that both the Old Testament and the New Testament as they appear in the Biblical canon are corrupt and untrustworthy.[5] These books no longer contain the *Tawrah* and the *Injil* that the Qur'an speaks of; they do not express the words of God as previously

vite Christians to "consider Muslims *not against* but rather *with them…"* While there is much that is laudable in these sentiments, the statement regarding "freedom to follow God" is inherently contradictory, for its literal application on the part of Christians would completely undermine the Muslims' overall intent. Christians are obligated to fulfill the commands of God to *"preach the good news to all creation"* (Mark 16:15); to *"make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"* (i.e., the Trinity; Matthew 28:19); to call upon people to *"confess with their mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in their hearts that God has raised Him from the dead"*—and thus be "saved" (Romans 10:9); and to acknowledge the truth that *"no one who denies the Son has the Father"* (1 John 2:23).

Conclusions

Students of the Bible are aware that the Christian Scriptures are filled with seemingly contradictory principles that in actuality are points that must be held in a very precise tension. The sovereign-

Partnerships in Pauline Perspective

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To borrow a storyline from Andrew Walls (1996:3ff), if scholarly space travelers visited this planet in 1910 and witnessed how the Western church was subsidizing indigenous Christian movements around the world, and then returned again in 2010 only to observe the same, they would rightly conclude that those dedicated to discipling the nations continue to place unnecessary obstacles in the path of the *missio Dei*. One is therefore left wondering whether the academic discipline of missiology has made any substantial difference in this area over the course of a century.

Introducing the IPM

The International Partnership Movement (IPM) has already been well-documented (cf. Little 2005:171ff). This designation refers to strategic relationships between Western and non-Western individuals, churches and/or organizations which involve the one-way flow of finances and not associations between Western entities. The IPM has witnessed an increasing number of organizations join its ranks over the past decades. In 1964, there were forty-two agencies in the United States and Canada supporting nationals and their respective ministries. In 1976, that number rose to ninety-four. In 1986, it grew to 107 and in 2000, it climbed to 130 agencies. In 2004, the *Mission Handbook* reported 143 agencies specifically supporting ministries overseas (Welliver and Northcutt 2004:341–42, 506–7). To provide a monetary picture of this trend, the total amount of just four key organizations involved in the IPM for the year 2004 came to just over $53 million which among other things went to support a minimum of 22,093 non-Western personnel. By any standard of measurement, this is a powerful force operating in world missions today.

The IPM appeals to at least six axioms to justify its modus operandi. First, the dynamic interactions within the Trinity sanction partnership in mission. Frampton Fox maintains, "This foundation in the nature of God…is the strongest biblical underpinning yet for the necessity of seeking partnerships in ministry"

(2001:296–97). Second, the unity of the body of Christ provides the impetus for mutual sharing on a global level. Samuel Chiang states, "We believe in the principle of interdependence (Eph. 2:11–15; 1 Cor. 12:21–26) and its corollary that although diversity exists, the unity of the Body is paramount….The concept of interdependence requires us….to share financially" (1992:288; cf. Van Engen 2000:102). Third, the financial partnership between the Apostle Paul and the Philippian church encourages similar arrangements today. According to

Luis Bush, the "basis of true Christian partnership is contained in the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Philippi…. [It] reveals the ingredients for successful partnerships in the twenty-first century" (1992:4). Fourth, the clear teaching of Scripture validates the activities of the IPM. Daniel Rickett asks:

> If Christians are to avoid dependency, what are we to do with the command to carry one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2)? What are we to say when we see our brother in need and have the means to help (1 John 3:16–20)? And what are we to make of Paul's collection of funds from the churches of Asia Minor for the suffering church in Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1–3)? (2000:15).

Fifth, cultural systems of economic exchange are legitimate mechanisms to redistribute wealth among international partners (Fox 2007:154–55; cf. Van Rheenen 2005:294ff). And last, the success of the IPM supports its agenda. With reference to partnerships, William Taylor comments, "For every bad case, I know of five good ones" (1994:238).

Assessing the IPM

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> ## OF COURSE, NO ONE should question the sincerity of those involved in the IPM, yet the veracity of their claims must be challenged.

must be challenged.

First of all, Max Warren has pointed out that it is intrinsically problematic to employ the Trinity as a model for missional partnerships given the fallen and sinful state of humanity, including the redeemed portion of it (1956:39). Moreover, although the members of the Godhead eternally co-exist in one divine essence, they clearly have differing functions in creation and redemption (Jn. 1:3; 3:5–8, 16; 14:26, 28; 15:26). As Wayne Grudem notes, "The Son and Holy Spirit are equal in deity to God the Father, but they are subordinate in their roles" (1994:249). Therefore, it is difficult to see how one can use the Trinity

as a paradigm for partnership in mission unless some type of hierarchical arrangement among participants is arranged.

Second, for all the criticism of the Three-Selfs church model one thing is certain—New Testament churches were self-sustaining. As Melvin Hodges observes, "Paul was certainly aware of the oneness of the body of Christ, yet there is no hint of his requiring the church in one area to undertake the supplying of the operational expenses of the churches in another area" (1972:44–45). And in relation to expressing unity within the body of Christ through monetary sharing, Roland Allen surmises: "unity so maintained . . . is not Christian unity at all. It is simply submission to bondage for the sake of secular advantage and it will fail the moment that any other stronger motive urges in the direction of separation" (1962:57). Furthermore, one wonders in what ways the Western church is actually manifesting its dependence upon the non-Western church in accordance with the interdependence model. As Glenn Schwartz has noted (2007:38), this is not partnership but "sponsorship" (contra Lundy 2003:169), since resources are only flowing in one direction.

Third, the idea that Paul was a hired worker of the Philippian church during his missionary career reflects a selective reading of Scripture. Paul explicitly stated that while others had the right to receive support from churches (cf. 1 Cor. 9:4–14), he himself had been placed under a divine "compulsion" to preach the gospel without charge (1 Cor. 9:16). As such, he considered his "reward" to be converts he won to Christ apart from payment (1 Cor. 9:18). This was his "boast" and he would have rather died than to make it "an empty one" (1 Cor. 9:15; cf. Little 2005:31–32). Once this is recognized, his relationship with the Philippian church comes into clear focus. Gerald Hawthorne explains: "Gifts caused him problems. It violated his principle of paying his own way by working with his hands, so that he might himself be free of depending on others, and so as to make the gospel free of charge to ev-

erybody. Consequently he swings suddenly from praising the Philippians [in 4:10ff] to informing them that he did not need their gift, that he had learned self-sufficiency" (1983:210). Therefore, his letter to the Philippians can be best described as "a careful reply that combined cautious gratitude with a gentle but firm demand that they not henceforth infringe on his own self-reliance" (Hawthorne 1983:195).

Fourth, what the IPM invokes for scriptural support, upon closer examination, is tenuous at best. The Greek word for "burdens" in Galatians 6:2 refers to temptations of a moral nature, and as such, is asserting the obligation within the body of Christ to help one another overcome sin. In addition, to conclude that mission entails meeting physical needs within the body of Christ is to repeat the mistake of past generations. In 1967, R. Pierce Beaver stated: "The so-called world missionary enterprise is no longer much of a missionary operation but an interchurch aid system involving…the giving of subsidies" (1967:3). That is, mission was taken for member care within the church. This is what John Rowell advocates by calling for the implementation of "A Missionary Marshall Plan for the Twenty-First Century" (2007:169ff; cf. Lundy 2003:172). In order to avoid this pitfall the church must define and pursue mission as "crossing barriers from church to nonchurch, faith to nonfaith" (Van Engen 1996:26). And in reference to the Gentile collection project for the Jerusalem church, what is commonly overlooked is that Paul bore gifts from receiving churches as a demonstration of indebtedness for having received the gospel from the sending church in Jerusalem (cf. Rom. 15:27). If the IPM desires to be biblical, then this pattern

cannot be ignored simply for the sake of expediency today.

Fifth, mission theologians and practitioners must remind themselves that not every cultural trait is compatible with Christian mission. The Apostle Paul recognized this. Although he adapted his ministry to fulfill the social category of an itinerant philosopher in Hellenistic world of his day, there were limits to his approach (cf. Little 2005:33–35). For example, the Sophists charged for their teaching services and by doing so entered into a patron-client economic system of exchange. Cynics, on the other hand, either begged as a way to survive or worked for a living. Paul distanced himself for the begging

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Cynics but identified with those who supported themselves. He did so because he did not want to be confused with others who were "peddling" and "adulterating" the word of God (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2). F. F. Bruce notes that Paul was motivated to behave in this fashion because Jewish tradition taught that religious instruction should not be a means of "personal aggrandizement" (1977:107; cf. 1 Tim. 3:8; Tit. 1:7, 11; 1 Pet. 5:2). As such, he refused to enter into cultural systems which contradicted higher priorities regarding the ethical spread of the gospel. Given the fact that ecclesiastical crime is now estimated to be in the range of $27 billion (Barrett, Johnson, and Crossing 2009:32), his methodology outshines that of the IPM.

And last, using success as proof for the validity of one's strategy is a dangerous affair. Just because something works does not make it true or right (cf. Geisler 1999:606). For instance, there are cases in which churches have experienced tremendous growth in Africa. Upon further investigation, it was

discovered that after the worship service missionaries were actually handing out money to those present. Thus, "Pragmatism cannot be allowed to overrule spiritual principles and blind us to the lessons of history" (Ott 1993:291). Also, the question needs to be asked: what kind of Christianity spreads itself and then requires foreign money to sustain it? Surely a sub-biblical and defective one. Hodges makes the well-taken point:

> It seems to me that so long as [indigenous believers] are not prepared to sacrifice whatever is necessary to support their churches, this is convincing proof that the church has failed in its fundamental objective—to convince a people of the truth of Christianity, for surely it is true in this, as in all ages of all peoples in all countries, that the only real test of conviction is the desire and willingness to sacrifice (1976:75).

Indeed, Christian movements throughout history, from the early church, to Ethiopia, to Madagascar, to China, to Nagaland, have all flourished through personal sacrifice quite apart from outside investment.

Additional Concerns

There are other related issues that the IPM has not satisfactorily considered. No one involved in the IPM has ever addressed the reason why the West has so much to give away in the first place. For example, Bob Finley, who actually suggests that the Western church should cease sending its own sons and daughters cross-culturally but instead serve as an endless "supply line" for the non-Western church, never broaches the issue (2005:245). Also, Paul Hiebert and Sam Larsen, in their otherwise excellent article, never deal with the subject (1999). Yet the truth is that the root cause for global economic disparities is unjust international trade practices (cf. Bonk 1993:61). Thus, the disturbing but unavoidable conclusion is that "the churches of the West have only been giving back to the Third World what has been taken in a context of injustice and oppression" (WCC 1980:20). So should the West just keep giving away what has been siphoned off others? Steve Saint, for one, answers in the negative since:

1) it is difficult to appreciate something that costs nothing; 2) it alienates those who receive from those who don't; and 3) it creates a need where previously there was none (2001:102). To grasp the import of what Saint is saying, all one has to do is contemplate what would happen if a foreign donor selectively started handing out thousands of dollars to people in Western churches.

Then there is the commercialization of Christianity. According to Gailyn Van Rheenen, the "Western temptation is to conceptualize and organize the missionary task on an economic level that can only be sustained by Western support and oversight" (2000:1). This has resulted in the development of mission strategies which are "money intensive" (Bonk 1993:61), signifying that one must have a lot of capital to do Christianity Western-style. On this very subject, Robert Speer lamented over a century ago: "It is inexpress-ibly sad to have the mission work reduced to this commercial basis, and to have all growth and enlargement conditioned on increased appropriations. This makes Christianity's appeal inferior to that of Buddhism or Mohammedanism" (1902:51). Some fifty years later, Warren added, those "concerned with the practical task of the Christian Mission certainly have to take seriously the embarrassment to partnership presented by the financial factor" (Warren 1956:91). Part of this embarrassment relates to what Ajith Fernando reports: "non-Christians . . . say a new colonialism has dawned: 'First the Christians came with the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other. Now they come with the Bible in one hand and dollars in the other'" (1999:442). This unfor-tunate situation has arisen despite the fact that no clear "correlation…between material means and spiritual goals" can be substantiated in mission (Warren 1956:91–92). Or as Donald McGavran observed: "There is seldom positive correlation between degree of aid and amount of growth" (1959:117).

Furthermore, there is the thorny topic of supporting nationals with foreign funds. That there is an abundance of evidence demonstrating the disastrous consequences of such a policy is beyond question (cf. Wayne Allen 1998:176–81; Lo 1999:14–16; Garrison 2004:249ff). For example, in one Asian country it was discovered that

> people [are] coming…with money and literally "buying" church leaders. They ask a church leader how much those other overseas people are paying them. "Oh, they give you only $35 a month. We pay $50!" In one congregation of 300 members, there were 262 members in foreign pay. One house church movement had 80% of their pastors on foreign support. And what was even more disturbing is that following the [turnover of the government], the church grew rapidly. That growth slowed considerably when foreign people and foreign money [later] poured in (Schwartz 2002:2).

Nevertheless, the Western church continues to plow ahead in supporting nationals as non-Western leaders plead for more and more assistance (e.g. D'Sousa 1999). In doing so, it is ignoring the wisdom which John Nevius articulated long ago when he observed that paying church workers: 1) "tends to excite a mercenary spirit, and to increase the number of mercenary Christians"; 2) "tends to stop the voluntary work of unpaid agents"; and 3) "makes it difficult to judge between true and

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false, whether as preachers or as church members" (1958:14–16).

There is also the conundrum of dependency. Rickett has gone on record as stating: "Let us be done with the debate over dependency" (2002:35). But many believe, including Scott Moreau, that dependency is a "perennial risk in missions" (Barnes 2006:41). As a case in point, Robert Reese has confirmed that the dependency syndrome, which has more to do with a debilitating state of mind than income levels (cf. Schwartz 2007:14–15), is alive and well both in the realm of short-term missions and theological education (2005:1; 2009:180ff; cf. Little 2005:205). The plain truth is that no one should underestimate the devastating effects of dependency because it creates addicts who "feel increasingly powerless" (Smith 2000:269); it undermines the recipients "personal sense of worth" (Keidel 1997:46); it thwarts "local initiative" (Schwartz 2007:54); it results in "the ease of others" (2 Cor. 8:13); it robs national churches of the Lord's "good measure" (Lk. 6:38); and it furthers paternalism since "control inheres in aid" (McGavran 1959:113). This last point is indisputable unless one wants to argue for a denial of donor responsibility as Finley and Rowell have done by advocating that there should be "no strings attached" to Western giving (2005:232; 2007:238). Paul would have never gone along with such a scenario as all things are to be done honorably "in the sight of the Lord [and] also in the sight of men" (2 Cor. 8:21). And because more monetary wealth is passing from one portion of the body of Christ to another than at any time in history, one is left to conclude that the global church is presumably experiencing the most paternalistic age it has ever known. The fact is "Money gives power; power results in domination. [Consequently] True partnership between unequals, if not impossible, is extremely unlikely" (Bonk 2006:83). In other words, "Partnership and interdependence are not possible when it is assumed that one side is developed (has already arrived) and is now helping the other

side to reach the same level" (Ramseyer 1980:33). It is therefore difficult to see how any amount of "fine-tuning" (Rickett 2002:28) or "giving more, not less" (Rowell 2007:242) will ever solve the practical impasses associated with financial partnerships between Western and non-Western Christians (e.g. Gupta and Lingenfelter 2006:199–202; Lederleitner 2009:282).

And finally, the captivity of Christianity to Western culture cannot be ignored. In my short lifetime, I have witnessed "I Found It" crusades, Evangelism Explosion campaigns, "True Love Waits" seminars, and now, Purpose Driven Church workshops in various countries around the world. There is nothing wrong with these programs per se, the problem comes when they are transplanted in soil vastly different than the one in which they were germinated. In relation to this, the anthropologist William Kornfield notes, there is a

synergistic relationship between Western funding and the Westernization of the Gospel. By Westernization we mean the tie in between Western financing and a Westernization of the Gospel of Christ. Thus the materialistic and individualistic core value system of the West tends to override both the two/thirds world family/community core values as well as the biblical core value system. The net result is "another gospel"—not the Gospel of Jesus Christ (1997:5).

This is no more apparent than in theological education. Westerners donate to theological agendas, curricula, and institutions which make sense to them and by doing so unwittingly impose a culturally-specific construct of the Christian faith upon others. In view of the fact that such efforts are interpreted as tools of "Western cultural imperialism" (Tienou 1990:76), Wilbert Shenk

has called for "the Western captivity of all theology [to] be broken" (2001:105) in hopes that the church in other contexts can embark upon the blessed task of self-theologizing. Accordingly, the manner in which partnership in mission is being envisioned today can hardly be considered "a non-negotiable mandate by God" (Downey 2006:202).

Pauline Orthopraxy: A Needed Corrective

Most if not all people dedicated to fulfilling the Great Commission today would affirm that the sole basis for Christian faith and practice is the Bible. Yet for whatever reason there has been a preoccupation with the former to the neglect of the latter. That is, the church has concentrated on "orthodoxy", right

MOST IF NOT ALL PEOPLE dedicated to fulfilling the Great Commission today would affirm that the sole basis for Christian faith and practice is the Bible.

or correct doctrine and thinking, to the exclusion of "orthopraxy", right or correct practice and action. This predicament is most discernible in the area of finance since, according to Herbert Kane, "no other one thing has done so much harm to the Christian cause" (1976:91). As such, it is imperative that the Western church recovers biblical models regarding the proper use of money in mission.

Scripture presents no better model on this subject than the Apostle Paul. His life merits close scrutiny because his methods gave birth to locally sustainable movements of Christianity whereas ours have woefully failed. Some would object at this point by claiming that Paul's missionary strategy should be taken as descriptive and not prescriptive for all ages. However, Allen begs to differ:

That however highly we may estimate St Paul's personal advantages or the assistance

which the conditions of his age afforded, they cannot be so great as to rob his example of all value for us. In no other work do we set the great masters wholly on one side, and teach the students of today that whatever they may copy, they may not copy them, because they lived in a different age under exceptional circumstances and were endowed with exceptional genius. It is just because they were endowed with exceptional genius that we say their work is endowed with a universal character…

…it is said that methods must change with the age. The Apostle's methods were suited to his age, our methods are suited to ours…. Unless we are prepared to drag down St Paul from his high position as the great Apostle of the Gentiles, we must allow to his methods a certain character of universality, and now I venture to urge that, since the Apostle, no other has discovered or practised methods for the propagation of the Gospel better than his or more suitable to the circumstances of our day (1962:4–5, 147).

What Allen is describing, although not naming it as such, is the pedagogical paradigm of "Pauline orthopraxy." That is, the manner in which Paul went about spreading Christianity serves as a trustworthy guide, an educational tool,

sive statement regarding the binding nature of Paul's ministry is Philippians 4:9: "The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things." Notice, it is not just what people have "heard" from Paul, namely, his doctrine, that they are to "practice," but also what they have "seen" in Paul, specifically, his entire ministry. Furthermore, Paul says to Timothy: "you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance" (2 Tim. 3:10). In doing so, he places his "teaching" on the same level as his "conduct" in ministry (cf. Little 2005:116). Thus, in Paul's mind there was no dichotomy between orthodoxy and orthopraxy—both served as a legitimate and necessary means of instruction to others in mission. It is therefore undeniable that biblical imperatives have been placed before the church to pursue mission in the way of Paul. Consequently, the Apostle "marked out for all time the lines

the dependency syndrome which presently characterizes much of the relationship between the Western and non-Western church; he would concentrate on the development of local resources to grow the church; and he would emphasize localization over globalization as the means to guarantee a productive future for indigenous Christianity (cf. Little 2005:235ff).

Appeal for Local Sustainability

The stark reality is the "subsidization of the church has been a mistake from the beginning. The damage which subsidies have done has far outweighed any good which they have accomplished…. In this situation, not a moratorium on mission, but a moratorium on chronic subsidies…is not only justified but essential for the responsible maturity on both sides of the relationship" (Ramseyer 1980:38). The Western church is thus urged to embark "upon an era of planned weaning" through the implementation of "indefinitely reproducible" patterns (McGavran 1970:310). Indeed, as George Verwer asserts, "the future does not lie" with more sums of money going overseas (2000:100).

THE STARK REALITY IS the "subsidization of the church" has been a mistake from the beginning."

and an authoritative standard for the missionary exploits of the church in subsequent generations. Although there are solid theoretical, historical, strategic, theological, and missiological bases for the orthopraxy of Paul (cf. Little 2005:75ff), there is space to only touch on the biblical basis here.

Paul's orthopraxy in mission draws support from the imitatio Pauli theme presented throughout his epistles: "I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me" (1 Cor. 4:16); "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1); "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us" (Phil. 3:17); "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thes. 1:6). However, the most comprehen-

and principles of successful missionary work" (Speer as quoted in Sanders 1984:105).

So what were Paul's methods, particularly with reference to foreign subsidy of local Christian movements? Three facts are clear: 1) he gave no inducements to either convert to or serve Christ (cf. Speer 1902:263); 2) he never transferred funds from churches in one area to pay for the ministries of churches in another (cf. McQuilkin 1999:41); and 3) he expected churches to step out in mission using local resources (Ac. 19:9–10; 20:33–35; Rom. 1:8; 16:19; 1 Th. 1:6–8). In light of this, Dean Gilliland notes that if Paul "were among us today there is no question… he would expect new churches to provide the financial basis for their own lives" (1983:255). To be more specific, he would labor resolutely to dismantle

This challenge does not imply the death blow to struggling Christians in the non-Western world. Quite the contrary. Just as respected economists are discovering that governments in the majority world can best grow their economies through international trade rather than by foreign aid (Easterly 2006:37–59, 341–47; Moyo 2009:114ff), nationals are expressing confidence that indigenous Christian movements can and should be sustained through local resources. For example, with reference to the church in Kenya, planted over a century ago but heavily subsidized to this day, MacMillan Kiiru feels there is "great willingness" to pay for its ministries with local funds. "Support is guaranteed" if the Kenyan church is simply taught sound principles of stewardship so that the sixty percent of Christians who presently do not tithe will begin to do so (2002:iii, 17).

The field of missiology, although

relatively young, has come entirely too far and learned too much to accept the status quo of the IPM. Missiologists should join together to spur on the "Ephesian moment" in which the Christian faith successfully passes from one culture to another and thereby becomes "a progressively richer entity" (Walls 2002:10, 79). Not to do so would betray the best our discipline has to offer on behalf of the *missio Dei*.

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An Open Letter to David Hesselgrave
about a misunderstanding stated in *MissionShift* about Ralph D. Winter: With a Response from David Hesselgrave

Dear Dr. Hesselgrave:

Congratulations to you and Ed Stetzer for your new book, *Mission-Shift*. I consider this to be a landmark volume with three great missiologists (Van Engen, Hiebert, Winter) giving past, present and future assessments of evangelical mission. (Well, Winter could never resist bringing in history, so we get a perspective on the past a second time, as well as his assignment to talk about the future!). The responses and responses to responses are thought provoking and challenging, giving the feel of a friendly, enriching dialog.

Thank you for including Ralph Winter's thinking, some of it controversial, in your new book. This is a wonderful way to share his legacy with the mission world. I have always appreciated your kindness and fairness in interacting with Dr. Winter even when the two of you had to agree to disagree. Your summary of Ralph Winter's meta-scientific narrative is fair and balanced, in all but one point.

You were writing after his death so Winter was unable to read your response to his article. He would certainly have corrected your statements about himself on page 290 related to Open Theism. Those of us who worked with him on a daily basis realize it is not a fair assessment of Winter to state, "along with undercutting the omniscience of God, Winter's open theism would seem to undermine the full authority of Scripture and emasculate the biblical gospel."

Winter agreed wholeheartedly with Boyd's thesis about Satan's activity in this world, but he disagreed with Boyd's thesis about God's foreknowledge. I wrote about this in 2005 in an article about Winter's "Wartime Missiology." Boyd himself admits that his views on God's foreknowledge are not essential to understanding the warfare world-

view that postulates that God's sovereignly chosen self-limitations leave free choice to creatures to potentially use their freedom for evil purposes. (Gregory A. Boyd. *Satan and the Problem of Evil* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001], 86, 87.)

In corresponding with a pastor who objected to the fact that Mission Frontiers had published an excerpt from one of Boyd's books, Ralph Winter replied by email (Nov. 11, 2008):

Hardly any magazine excludes documents on the basis of what else the author might believe. If we did that we could not publish anything by Luther, Calvin, Spurgeon, Moody, etc. *I personally have absolutely nothing to do with so-called Open Theism. I think it is ridiculous.* [emphasis added]

But I am very eager to see Evangelicals give up a certain pervasive fatalism which does without a Satan and allows God to be blamed for every evil act of every being to whom God has given freewill, angelic or human, and who chooses to do wrong, and then explains the evil as God's mysterious will.

See, if you believe cancer is sent by God and is always His mysterious will, then you have no basis upon which to seek out the causes of cancer and remove them.

I highly respect you, and appreciate your willingness to give the academic missions world a chance to see Ralph Winter's position on God's foreknowledge and the authority of Scripture. Winter stated in a lecture to his Sunday School class in 2005 ("Growing Up with the Bible"), that "the Bible's influence is probably the most important single strand in the tapestry of my life." His family and I would like for him to be remembered and written about in years to come with that in mind.

For the Glory of God,
Beth Snodderly, EMS Southwest Regional Vice President Provost, William Carey International University

Response by David Hesselgrave

Dear Dr. Snodderly,

I want to express my sincere thanks for your generous endorsement of our new book, *MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium* A compilation of the works of fifteen outstanding evangelical missiologists, it's publication is mainly due to the untiring efforts of my coeditor, Dr. Ed Stetzer, and his accomplices of the B&H Publishing Group.

More importantly, however, I thank you for correcting my misperception and setting the record straight concerning Dr. Ralph Winter's position relative to open theism. I obviously misread his intentions when, on a number of occasions and in various venues, Winter commended Dr. Gregory Boyd's theology and books. For example, Boyd's writings are cited no less than seven times in Winter's *Frontiers in Mission: Discovering and Surmounting Barriers to the Missio Dei* (sec. ed., 2005, WCIU Press). Now while it is certainly true that to applaud an author and his works does not necessarily imply total agreement with him as Winter says (see op. cit. p. 200), I do believe that in this particular case more was required.. It was well known at the time that open theism was a major issue in the proceedings of the Evangelical Theological Society. Boyd's answers to the question "Is God to blame when bad things happen to good people"—namely, that Satan is unusually powerful and God's foreknowledge is limited—was also well known. To make extensive use of Boyd's argument for Satan's power without dealing at all with his argument for a limitation of divine foreknowledge was, I think, unwarranted. Winter himself acknowledged as much in the letter from the questioning pastor you quoted in your letter. In that letter and with reference to Boyd's arti-

cle "Is God to Blame?" Winter wrote, "I agree that we would have done well to put a disclaimer saying, 'Here is a very thoughtful article but you should know that we do not endorse everything he teaches.'" Even that admission is vague. Nevertheless, though Winter disavowed Boyd's open theism in private correspondence and conversation, there is no indication that he did so in public venues. As I say, I think he was obligated to do so under the circumstances that prevailed at that time..

Ironically, had Ralph Winter not passed away prior to the time when I wrote the concluding chapter to MissionShift, it is very likely that this particular conversation would not be taking place at all. Subsequent to introducing his "radically new interpretation of the Lord's Prayer and the Great Commission" (Winter later observed that "radically new" was probably an overstatement) and with a deep-seated desire to understand his kingdom mission, I submitted almost everything I wrote about it to my colleague Ralph Winter in order to make sure that I was not misrepresenting his new position. Moreover, he and I carried on an extended and sometimes rather intense dialogue almost up to the time of his homegoing. (Incidentally, I hope to see that dialogue made public at some point in the future.) However, though over time we exchanged views on a wide range of related topics I cannot find any reference to open theism as such. It did conflict with the position of the ETS on inerrancy so I inquired as to his view on that. He wrote assuring me that he was a firm believer in the complete integrity of the Bible autographs and we left it at that.

Dr. Snodderly, as you know, the bond between Ralph Winter and I was forged way back in the 1960s when he was associated with Donald McGavran and his School of Church Growth. It was fostered during long years of association with him while serving on the Board of Directors of William Carey International University; and while supporting his leadership in the A.D 2000 movement to complete the task of world evangelization. The bond was actually furthered during our extended debate as to the validity of aspects of his new kingdom

mission. When one day soon I follow him to the other side of the valley and, by God's good grace, see my esteemed friend and mentor it will be resumed. With that meeting and the greater good of the body of Christ in mind and heart, I want to do whatever I can to set the record straight. Ralph Winter did not espouse open theism. I reasoned that he did on the basis of inference from silence rather than solid evidence. That was inadmissible and even inexcusable. I can only hope that it was not also unforgiveable.

Thank you for bringing the matter to my attention. And thank you for continuing fellowship in advancing the cause of world missions.

In our Lord,
David Hesselgrave, Lindenhurst, Illinois,
August 5, 2010

Social Versus Theological Pluralism

ty of God and the responsibility of man, "free will" and "predestination," "working out one's salvation" and "God's working in one to will and to act," the Kingdom in the "here and now" and the Kingdom "yet to come." For unbelievers, these matters are maddening in their paradoxicality and are seen as representative of the allegedly human, rather than divine, origin of the Bible. But to devoted followers, the balancing of these tension points contributes to the process of sanctification, as true disciples attain maturity through mastery of these—and other—pairs of principles that seem mutually exclusive.

Sociological pluralism and theological pluralism represent yet another of these Biblical tensions. As apostles of Christ entrusted with a *"ministry of reconciliation"* (2 Corinthians 5:18) we must *"make the most of every opportunity"* (Ephesians 5:15-17) for contact and dialogue with Muslim individuals, families, and groups. We must welcome them into our neighborhoods, our schools, our civic centers, our homes. In this sense, the sociological pluralism inherent in democratic political philosophies holds a tremendous advantage for the spread of the Gospel. We should do

all we can to champion this side of the "tension."

At the same time, as much as we might like to identify so-called similarities and "points of contact" between Christianity and Islam, we must lay aside all hope of ever developing a consistent theological pluralism that would encompass these two faiths. While there may indeed be points for discussion such as "love of God and neighbor," an honest examination and thorough discussion of these points will reveal that a true pluralism—in the sense of an acceptance of the validity of the teachings of both religious systems—is ultimately impossible to achieve. The differences between the faiths are irreconcilable.
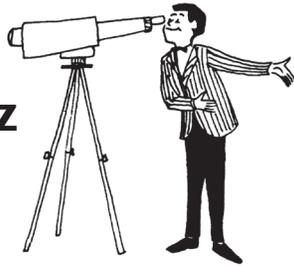
So, then, let us take to heart the challenge of Os Guinness to increase our sophistication, to become masters of discernment, and to attain a Biblically supported balance between the tension points such as those we have been discussing. Only in so doing can we meet the standards and win the approval of the God of all Truth; only in presenting the Gospel in its fullness will we truly be *"loving our [Muslim] neighbors as ourselves."*

Endnotes

1. Os Guinness, *The Gravedigger File: Papers on the Subversion of the Modern Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), p. 41.

2. See the official website at www.acommonword.com

3. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTY-9FY13kw

4. Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab Bad'al-Khalq, Bab Sifat Iblis wa Junudihi, Hadith #3329.

5. "Just as the Tawrah is not the Old Testament, or the Pentateuch, as now received by the Jews and Christians, so the *Injil* mentioned in the Qur'an is certainly not the New Testament, and it is not the four Gospels, as now received by the Christian Church…" Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, New Edition (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 1998), p. 291.

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As seen through the LENZ

With the publishing of the *Occasional Bulletin* electronically, we now have the luxury of expanding the number of pages, and the articles can be more complete or expanded in content. Such is the case with this edition. We will be making other changes in the future, changes that will be exciting and more interactive. More information will be forthcoming.

Larry Poston helps us to think of the distinction between sociological and theological pluralism, with the main emphasis being that theological pluralism is impossible if we believe in the unique plan of God in bringing men to salvation through the work of Christ alone. He uses thorough logic in presenting his case.

Chris Little does us a great favor in summarizing the challenges of dependency, and the dangers that it entails for the furtherance of the Gospel. While this is not a new topic, Chris concisely points out from Pauline theology as well as past mission thinkers, the truth that western funds are a hindrance to the theology that Paul laid out in his mission strategy. The bibliography alone is valuable for future reference.

We conclude with a gracious interchange between Dr. Beth Snodderly, and Dr. David Hesselgrave on the thinking of Ralph Winter with regard to open theism. ∎

Partnerships in Pauline Perspective

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