

The **Exclusivism/Inclusivism Debate** and Evangelical Missiology

Harold Netland

During the past half century the theology of religions has emerged as one of the most significant and controversial concerns of theology and missiology.¹ Evangelical interest in the subject increased dramatically in the 1990s, with the question of the destiny of the unevangelized the central focus of attention.² Evangelicals insist that Jesus Christ is the only Savior for all humankind and that those who hear the gospel and respond in faith to its message are saved. But is it also possible for those who never hear of Jesus Christ to be saved?

The issue became especially contentious among American evangelicals with the 1992 publications of Clark Pinnock's *A Wideness in God's Mercy* and John Sanders' *No Other Name*, which argued that on the basis of Scripture we can expect that large numbers of the unevangelized will be saved.³ In 2004, Reformed theologian and former missionary Terrance L. Tiessen published *Who Can Be Saved?*, the theologically most sophisticated defense of a similar view. The "wider hope" perspective, as it is sometimes called, has elicited vigorous critiques, the most significant of which is the collection of essays in *Faith Comes by Hearing*, published in 2008.⁴

The debate over the necessity of explicit faith in Jesus Christ is important, as the issues have significant implications for theology of religions and missiology. What follows is neither an overview of the recent debate nor an attempt to resolve the issues, but merely some general observations which might be useful in guiding further discussion.

Inadequacy of the Binary Categories

The view that explicit faith in Jesus Christ is necessary for salvation is often identified as exclusivism and the position of Pinnock, Sanders and Tiessen generally labeled inclusivism.⁵ The debate is then framed in terms of which of the two options is correct.

But there are at least two major problems with this approach. First, it is simplistic and misleading when applied to the range of carefully nuanced positions that evangelicals have put forward. In very broad terms, we can distinguish three general perspectives

nevertheless be saved. Although Jesus Christ is the one Savior for all people and salvation is possible only because of Christ's atoning work on the cross, one need not know explicitly about the gospel to be saved.

Many evangelicals, however, find themselves somewhere between these two positions, convinced that each goes beyond what the Biblical data strictly affirm. Those in this group (including Millard Erickson, J. I. Packer, John Stott, Christopher J. H. Wright, David Clark) admit that in principle God might save those who never explicitly hear the gos-

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evangelicals have adopted on the issue, with numerous subcategories within each.⁶ First, many evangelicals (including John Piper, David Hesselgrave, Ronald Nash, and contributors to *Faith Comes By Hearing*) hold that only those who hear the gospel and explicitly respond in faith to Jesus Christ in this life can be saved. Explicit knowledge of the gospel is thus necessary for salvation. Many regard this as the traditional evangelical position and it has been prominent in conservative evangelical theologies of mission.

The wider hope perspective, by contrast, maintains that large numbers of those who never hear the gospel will

pel, but they add that we simply do not know whether this occurs or, if so, how many might be saved in this manner. The clear pattern in the New Testament is for people to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and then, through God's grace, to respond in faith to Christ and be saved. Whether God's saving grace is also extended to those who do not hear the gospel is unclear in Scripture. (I would place myself in this group.)

Notice that already we have moved beyond the binary categories of exclusivism and inclusivism, and careful attention to the actual positions in the literature will result in yet further subcategories. Thus, Christopher Morgan and

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Daniel Strange each identify nine distinct positions on the question of the unevangelized, although interestingly their categories differ somewhat.⁷

Second, the question of the unevangelized is only one among many significant issues demanding attention in a theology of religions. Is there truth or goodness in other religions? Are there significant similarities between the beliefs and practices of other religions and Christian faith? To what extent, if any, can we build upon religious assumptions and practices in other religions? Can religious terms from other religions be used in translating Biblical terms and concepts? In what areas, and to what extent, should Christians cooperate with followers of other religions? Should interreligious dialogue be a part of Christian witness? When these other questions (many of which are central to discussions of contextualization) are considered, it becomes impossible to sort the various perspectives into two or three neat categories. One might be “exclusivistic” on one issue but “inclusivistic” or even “pluralistic” on another. It is more helpful to think in terms

sonally accepted through faith. (5) Ultimately, not everyone will be saved. (6) God is entirely righteous and just in his dealings with humankind. The disagreements are not over the means of salvation (faith vs works) but rather over the degree of knowledge or understanding about God that is necessary for salvation and how this knowledge is made available to sinners.

Moreover, disagreement on this issue has a long history, going back to the second century. Within recent evangelicalism, Pinnock and Sanders were not the first to put forward the wider hope perspective. In 1970 J.N.D. Anderson, a highly respected British evangelical, published essentially the same view. For two decades Anderson’s *Christianity and Comparative Religion* (1970) and *Christianity and World Religions* (1984) comprised the major evangelical treatment of the relation between Christian faith and other religions. Anderson was regularly invited by evangelical leaders to speak and write on the subject, expressing a kind of unofficial evangelical perspective on other religions.⁸ I mention this not to suggest that Anderson’s views are correct,

IT IS IMPORTANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE that the areas of agreement among evangelicals on the question of the unevangelized are more numerous and significant than points of disagreement.

of a broad continuum of perspectives on other religions, and where one is located along the continuum depends in part upon the particular issue and the religious tradition under consideration.

The Intraevangelical Debate

It is important to acknowledge that the areas of agreement among evangelicals on the question of the unevangelized are more numerous and significant than points of disagreement. For example, evangelicals agree on the following: (1) All people are sinners and face God’s just condemnation for sin. (2) Salvation is available only on the basis of the sinless person and atoning work of Jesus Christ. (3) No one is saved merely by doing good works or being religiously devout. (4) Salvation is always only by God’s grace and must be per-

but rather to illustrate that they have some history within evangelicalism.

Finally, disagreements over the issue arise not simply from disputes over proper exegesis of certain texts (e.g. does the example of Cornelius in Acts 10-11 really support the wider hope view? Does Acts 4:12 or John 14:6 really entail the necessity of explicit faith?) but also from basic hermeneutical differences in how we approach the data from Scripture. For example, various theological systems (e.g. covenant, dispensational) understand the relation between the Old and New Testaments differently, and disagree on the degree to which knowledge of the coming Christ was available and necessary for salvation in Old Testament times; or on the nature and extent of changes introduced by the Incarnation; or the nature and extent of elec-

tion; or the nature of general revelation; and so on. This can affect how one interprets particular texts with respect to the unevangelized.

Conclusion

In 1992 eighty five evangelical theologians from 28 countries (many from Asia) met in Manila under the auspices of the World Evangelical Fellowship to address the theme "The Unique Christ in Our Pluralistic World." The participants produced the Manila Declaration, a thoughtful and carefully crafted statement on the distinctives of the Christian gospel and its relation to other religious

theological questions over which some disagreement among evangelicals is inevitable.

Advocates of all three positions outlined above have been strong supporters of Christian missions and evangelism among followers of other religions. Surely all evangelicals can agree that all who hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and, by God's grace, respond in faith will be saved. Moreover, as the Manila Declaration reminds us, regardless of disagreement on some points we must continue to proclaim "the good news of salvation through trust in Jesus Christ". Out of obedience to the clear command of

John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).

4. Terrance L. Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved? Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004); *Faith Comes By Hearing: A Response to Inclusivism*, eds. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008).

5. In this, evangelicals have adopted the threefold taxonomy of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism first introduced by Alan Race in 1982 to depict Christian approaches to other religions. See Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1982).

6. For bibliography on evangelicals within each category see Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001) pp. 30825; and Christopher W. Morgan, "Inclusivisms and Exclusivisms," in *Faith Comes by Hearing*, pp. 1739.

7. See Christopher W. Morgan, "Inclusivisms and Exclusivisms", p. 26; Daniel Strange, *The Possibility of Salvation Among the Unevangelized* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2002) pp. 30431.

8. J. N. D. Anderson, *Christianity and Comparative Religion* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1970); and Sir Norman Anderson, *Christianity and World Religions: The Challenge of Pluralism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1984). See Sir Norman Anderson, "The Gospel: A Story to Tell to the Nations," in *Evangelical Roots*, ed. Kenneth Kantzer (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1978) pp. 17383; idem, "Christianity and the World's Religions" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, ed. Frank Gabelein. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) pp. 14357; and idem, "A Christian Approach to Comparative Religion," in *The World's Religions*, ed. Sir Norman Anderson (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1975) pp. 228-37. Professor Stephen Williams of Union Theological College, Belfast, Ireland recalls a conversation with Anderson: "During a visit to the home of Sir Norman Anderson, in the last years of his life, he told me that he had shown to Martin LloydJones the section on the destiny of the unevangelized in *Christianity and World Religions* prior to its publication. [Anderson] then said something to this effect: "Martin LloydJones returned it to me, slapped it on the desk and said, 'I buy every word of it; I am a Calvinist and God can save whomever he will!'"

Personal communication from Stephen Williams, November 5, 2009. Used with permission.

9. "The WEF Declaration," *The Unique Christ in Our Pluralistic World*, ed. Bruce J. Nicholls (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) p. 15. ■

IS IT POSSIBLE that [of those who do not hear the gospel of Jesus Christ] also might find salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ although they do not consciously know the name of Jesus?

traditions. The question of the unevangelized was addressed, although the Declaration acknowledges a lack of consensus on the issue.

"Is it possible that [those who do not hear the gospel of Jesus Christ] also might find salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ although they do not consciously know the name of Jesus? We did not achieve a consensus on how to answer this question. More study is needed. We did agree that salvation is to be found nowhere else than in Jesus Christ. The truth to be found in other religious teachings is not sufficient, in and of itself, to provide salvation. We further agreed that universalism (that all people without exception will be saved) is not biblical. Lastly, we agreed that our discussion of this issue must not in any way undercut the passion to proclaim, without wavering, faltering, or tiring, the good news of salvation through trust in Jesus Christ."

The issues in the debate over the unevangelized are significant and should be addressed, to the best of our ability, on the basis of the clear and comprehensive witness of the Scriptures, and not through proof-texting, emotional appeals, or pragmatic considerations. While we must each determine what we believe to be the position most faithful to Scripture, perhaps this is one of those

our Lord (Mt. 28:1820; Jn. 20:21) and a desire that all peoples give glory to God and worship Him appropriately (Ps. 67; 96; Isa. 45), we must urge all peoples, including sincere followers of other religions, to acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Endnotes

1. See Paul F. Knitter, *Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002); VeliMatti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003); and Harold Netland, "Theology of Religions, Missiology, and Evangelicals," *Missiology: An International Review* XXXIII no. 2 (April 2005) 14158.

2. It should be noted, however, that the essays in the second volume of the Evangelical Missiological Society Series, *Christianity and the Religions: A Biblical Theology of World Religions*, eds. Edward Rommen and Harold Netland (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1995) do address a broader range of issues. The 2002 Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society had as its theme "Evangelical Christianity and Other Religions," and although many of the sessions did focus upon salvation and the unevangelized the plenary sessions addressed broader themes as well. See *Biblical Faith and Other Religions: An Evangelical Assessment*, ed. David W. Baker (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2004).

3. Clark Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992);

2010: A “Decade from Heaven”

Grant McClung

As we move into the first year of a new decade (2010-2020), there are hopes expressed in the secular press that the next ten years—compared to the last decade—will bring an improvement in our lives and new hope for our world. At the close of 2009 *Time* magazine made headlines with their eye-catching story, “The ‘00s: Goodbye (at Last) to the Decade from Hell.” The author took note of the massive Y2K computer scare at the beginning of the last decade (January 1, 2000) and the global financial wipeout at the close of the decade—and ten years of misery, mishaps, and misfortunes—that caused the decade to also be labeled the “Decade of Reckoning,” the “Decade of Broken Dreams,” and even, “The Lost Decade” (Andy Serwer, *Time*, November 24, 2009).

All of that may be true on the surface, especially from the standpoint of North Americans who finally are catching up to the dismal economic realities already experienced for many decades by the “Majority World” (A term used by *New Internationalist* magazine to refer to Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean).

Followers of Jesus Christ, however, operate from a counter-cultural worldview quite apart from the predictions and prognostications of secular materialism. Living in-between the perils of our time and the promises of God, we follow Christ’s command to make disciples of all nations, going to the ends of the earth until the end of time (Matthew 28.18-20).

Our confidence is that 2010-2020 will be “A Decade from Heaven,” especially on a global scale. Why can we expect this possibility? Already there are signs that the next ten years will be:

A Decade of Defined Discipleship—in the Great Commission community—local churches, denominations, networks, associations, missions agencies, missions training systems, laity in the marketplace, students, youth, children—there is a convergence of a generation of international, interdenominational cooperation and part-

nership in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. This is expressed in the great theme of the Lausanne movement for world evangelization, “The Whole Church taking The Whole Gospel to The Whole World.” There is unprecedented unity and collaboration in place to reach the remaining unreached people groups and most resistant areas of the world with the gospel and new church planting.

A Decade of Demographic Destiny—In the coming decade, one of the largest demographic blocs in modern history (at least in the United States), the “Baby Boomers” will be firmly moved into retirement years (around

From all contemporary reports and accounts, it is precisely this generation of students, teen-agers, and children who are experiencing a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit in their world and are calling out in spiritual hunger and desperate desire for revival. Here is one report from an eyewitness to the recent Urbana 2009 Student Mission Convention where more than 16,000 students from 100+ countries came together to consider their place in God’s work in the world:

“Many Inter-Varsity staff who have been to Urbanas for decades have said this is the most spiritually hungry group of Urbana students they’ve ever seen. Seminars have been pouring

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.....

the ages of 55-75). Those keyed into kingdom values and the mission of God in the world will use their financial means and mentoring influence to challenge a whole new generation (their children and grandchildren). Already, missiologists are calling for a massive evangelism effort in the “4/14 Window,” the largest global age grouping of ages 4-14. While we could shudder at the dismal prospect of losing that generation, think of the strategic potential, the demographic destiny of masses from that age grouping ten years from now. When the current international age grouping of 4-14 comes to the close of this new decade in 2020 they will be in the age grouping of 14-24 and will have, Biblically/spiritually speaking, far-reaching potential. Just look at the impact of that age grouping in scripture, in Christian history, and in the most recent 100 years of Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal! We must reach, teach, and deploy this group for demographic destiny!

A Decade of Desperate Desire—

out into adjacent halls and floors, long lines to get into Bible studies, and students weeping in the main session as speaker after speaker challenged them to live for Christ!”

The “Great Century of Missions,” the era of William Carey and other notables, was preceded by over 100 years of “Concerts of Prayer,” in the Moravian and Pietist tradition—all of them led by laity and students. The modern Pentecostal/Charismatic movement was preceded by years of desperate intercession and a longing for holiness in many parts of the world. God answered those cries. In our day, scores of prayer movements such as the “Global Day of Prayer” are mobilizing multiplied millions of believers for ongoing intercession. It could very well be that we are on the verge of the greatest move of God in all of history, “A Decade from Heaven!”

A Decade of Divine Determination—The Bible is a mission book and our God is a missionary God. The entire scripture is filled with God’s directives and determination that, “...this

gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations..." (Matthew 24.14a) and that, "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people" (Acts 2.17a). We can rest with 100% assurance that when God's people meet God's requirements, then God will "... hear from heaven" and proactively respond among His people and in their world (2 Chronicles 7.14).

As we track the rapid expansion of the Church around the world, may we witness once again in this new decade a recurrence of the affirmation of Paul, Silas, and Timothy to the young church in Thessalonica:

"The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia —your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath" (1 Thessalonians 1.8-10).

In a suffering world, may we also be filled with the same "blessed hope" of Christ's second coming that captured the imagination and actions of the Thessalonians who were promised that, "... the Lord himself will come down from heaven..." (1 Thessalonians 4.16a) and their suffering would be relieved when, "...the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels" (2 Thessalonians 1.7).

Like the first disciples, it is not for us to predict, "...to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1.7) but to, "...receive power when the Holy Spirit comes..." on us and be Christ's witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1.8). As we move with faith and hope into this new decade, let us—like the early disciples—wait in prayer and expectancy for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that "came from heaven" (Acts 2.2; 1 Peter 1.12) and move into our world on mission with God.

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Cultural Intelligence

Cultural Intelligence: Improving Your CQ to Engage Our Multicultural World, David A. Livermore. Chap Clark, Series Editor. Baker Academic, 2009.

—**Reviewed by Dr James Neathery**, stateside Albania field director with East-West Ministries International and adjunct professor of World Missions and Intercultural Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary.

Something good bothers me about this book! First of all, it is written to those who work with adolescents. Then, secondly, it is applicable to life at home or abroad. Thirdly, it is well researched, written, and thought provoking. What is bothersome about all this is that somehow this arsenal of wisdom would not be well used by the church. Since it is written as part of a series targeting youth workers it may not be taken seriously by other leaders who need help equipping their people cross-culturally. And, since it is a formidable presentation of research, theory, and practice it may not be thoughtfully applied by youth ministers to the army of adolescents.

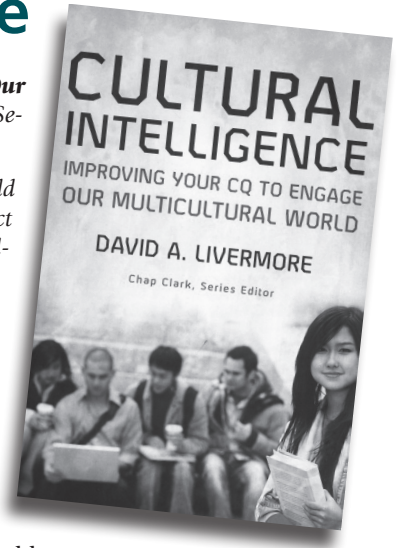
Targeting those who work with adolescents is genius. If the church can leverage youth to move into this multicultural world with the goal of loving others redemptively,

IF THE CHURCH CAN LEVERAGE YOUTH to move into this multicultural world with the goal of loving others redemptively, then it has created a network force uninhibited by the previous generation's fears and provincialism.

tively, then it has created a network force uninhibited by the previous generation's fears and provincialism. Author, David A. Livermore, (PhD. Michigan State University and executive director of the Global Learning Center at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary) writes a textbook primarily to the North American evangelical audience to help them improve the cultural dynamic equivalent of the IQ (intelligence quotient), i.e. the CQ (cultural quotient). The CQ involves the whole person, not just the intellect. CQ involves an omnivorous appetite for knowledge of the culture. It requires some level of interpretive skill to read a culture. Perseverance is the volitional part of CQ that overcomes relational obstacles. Finally there are the behaviors that mediate the person to person interface; expressions of loving intent.

The process of improving CQ to engage a multicultural world requires personal life change. Livermore provides ample illustrations of people who struggle with their prejudices, preconceptions, and the "irrationality" of those who are different, or as Livermore calls them, the Other. Livermore, to the delight of this reviewer, includes his own bouts and doubts about loving the Other which makes the book (textbook, i.e. Baker Academic) readable and trustworthy.

If you are a professor, use *CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE* as a textbook. It has substance. If you work with a mission agency preparing people for the field, use *CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE* as a grid for the reflective soon-to-be missionary to evaluate his or her cultural quotient. If you are a North American ministry leader trying to equip your people to live in the new reality of multiculturalism, use *CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE* to unleash church attendees to be creative and loving cross-cultural envoys. The point is to make good use of Livermore's work. As the world makes its way to North America let the church respond with Christ-like cultural intelligence.



The Search for Salvation: Millenarianism and Cargo Cults

John D. Wilson

Here are some key things I have learned about so-called cargo cults and millenarian movements in New Guinea and the Pacific Islands (primarily Melanesia).

The movements are socio/politico-religious cultic events or processes arising from existing traditional beliefs based on primal myths. In other words, they should not be seen as merely political or sociological; but inherently religious in a holistic way.¹

In my own study of the literature on cargo cults, it seemed that some anthropologists underestimate the religious or “spiritual” dimension of these movements. They stress the political or social reaction against the intrusion of the white man with his material goods and

and spiritual. Animism lies at the heart of millenarianism.

I am indebted to former colleague Jan Godschalk who pointed out that the kinds of myths which often lay behind specifically “messianic” movements in Papua usually refer to a primal ancestor who disappeared, but is expected to return. The problems of suffering, hunger, sickness and death arise from his departure; but are resolved again at his return. Typical of this in Papua is the Biak myth of Manseren /Koreri.² However, this does not seem to be the case for other kinds of millenarian movements which I have been aware of in Papua, such as the cult which flourished at Soba before and after the earthquake of 1989.³

Myths are invariably adapted and

interpretation. For example, Dongla Kobak (Otto Kobak’s father) explained to me that he believed the central Yali myth—the Yeli myth—obviously referred to the Tower of Babel, but that through the generations since their arrival in the Heluk valley, his ancestors had gradually forgotten and distorted the true story.

I think that no one (animist or westerner) ever experiences a total transformation of his/her worldview, and under times of stress, what we really believe and hold tacitly deep down in the heart will be expressed in our behaviour. We should therefore not be too quick to judge believers in another culture when they reveal some animistic tendencies and syncretistic aberrations of Christian belief. However, we should be ready to help them understand what the Bible teaches about the nature of the created world (of spirits, men, animals, biological life and matter), about the nature of God, and concerning the nature of salvation.

Of course, this may demand of us some re-thinking of our own theology which often has some subtle traces of Gnosticism—inherent dualism which arises in our long tradition from platonic thought through to the Enlightenment. Remember that the Reformation is itself part product of and part catalyst to the Enlightenment and its impact on western culture, and thus even our popular theology. We have inherited this dualism of body and soul; heart and mind; social and religious; and physical and spiritual. Consequently, we may (or perhaps certainly) have to wrestle with our theology in the context of Papua in order to bring the Bible’s holistic, integrated and comprehensive message to bear on the lingering effects of animism, and particularly in the current re-appearance of millenarianism in the Papua Merdeka and the Jerusalem movement.

Throughout the last 30 years or so of the Papuan Freedom movement (initially focused in the activities of the OPM and latterly in the more political thrust) there have been evidences of animistic ideas behind some of the efforts to attain “merdeka” such as concerted flag raising. (If we can all raise the flag at a strategic time and place, we will have merdeka.) One thread within the current focus on Jerusalem seems to be a mix-

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER that the animist sees the world in toto, comprised of every facet of being—physical, spiritual, social and material.

his religious tradition rather than see the socio-political aspect as a manifestation of something intrinsic to religious (animistic) belief and practice. One reason for this is probably an incorrect understanding of religion and its role in life; another is that western anthropologists (just like western missionaries) are products of a Greco-Roman heritage of platonic dualism fostered by the Enlightenment. In other words, westerners all tend to see religion as to do with the “spiritual” and socio-political ideas to do with the “real” world.

It is important to remember that the animist always sees the world in toto, comprised of every facet of being—physical, spiritual, social and material. Animism is holistic and part and parcel of a holistic worldview. Animism is also about what man does to influence or control his environment and his destiny by bringing about equilibrium among the various parts—material, physical

modified to accommodate new information. When people in such tradition-oriented cultures encounter Christianity, Christian beliefs can either be syncretised with the existing beliefs, or the original stories become re-interpreted to align with the Christian teaching. The former will inevitably occur where a lack of good, comprehensive and contextual Biblical teaching results in a lack of worldview transformation.

For example, the myth about the people coming out of the cave at Seinma, near Kurima, was adapted (in my time in Papua) by the Kurima people to accommodate the arrival of missionaries with the Bible. They said their first ancestors had the book when they came out of the cave; but it was stolen by (or lost to) the white men. In some way, the message of the book was other than what the missionaries taught (a bit like the Muslims with the Injil).

I also saw and heard evidence of re-

ture of animism and a kind of realized eschatology. (If we help messianic Jews reach the nations, and if we help orthodox Jews build the temple, God will bless us... and what does blessing look like for us Papuans... merdeka!)

At the bottom line, a millenarian movement or cargo cult is a "search for salvation"⁴—not salvation in the closely defined soteriological sense popularly held by evangelical Christians; but salvation in terms of recovery of the lost state as inherent in the native myths and oral traditions: the absence of death, disease and disaster realized among pigs, potatoes and people (on a social scale).

I think, therefore, it is important to give people the over-arching plan of redemption—the trajectory from Eden to

March 2008.

Thirdly, I think we can address the impact of a millenarian movement by teaching the gospel in such a way that we show that the gospel of salvation is also the gospel of the kingdom. It is also about the establishing of the rule of God in Christ's person. When he said "the kingdom of God is among you" he really meant it. Modern eschatology (of the last 200 years) has tended to de-emphasize the kingdom in the present and postpone its significance until the return of Christ. Consequently we have tended to separate the "kingdom" part from the gospel of the kingdom, and emphasize the gospel as good news about the salvation of our "souls."

This task is a challenge to us because

A HOLISTIC THEOLOGY OF GOSPEL, salvation, kingdom, and heaven and earth is the best antidote to the venom of animism with man in the driving seat of his holistic salvation.

the New Jerusalem to the degree that that the listening Papuans will understand that within Scripture there is a plan of salvation which encompasses the whole man within the whole of his society, within his whole world. It is tough for westerners to grasp and deal with; and I think we are just beginning to relearn what the Scriptures teach in that regard.⁵

Secondly, I believe it is important that in so doing, we give a true account of the spiritual dimension and close the gap of "the excluded middle"⁶ by giving clear teaching on the spiritual dimension from such passages as Ephesians (especially chapters 1-3 and 6), Philipians (our citizenship is—not will be—in heaven), and, of course, Revelation (where John is helped to see and understand what is going on in the spiritual dimension and how it impinges the present).

Personally, I was helped to see Revelation in regard to the dynamics of heaven and earth in the present; the unfolding of the reality of the kingdom (now, in the midst of suffering, persecution etc.) when I read *Discipleship on the Edge* by Darrell Johnson. That is why I taught Revelation to the Yali church leaders in

of our own heritage of dualism. Once again, we have to bring together what is joined in Scripture. We must not separate what God has joined together; although, I suppose we can blame Adam for starting that tendency. Yes, we are created with attributes for both spiritual and physical dimensions, but as westerners we pay lip service to the one and truly honour the other!

A holistic theology of gospel, salvation, kingdom, and of heaven and earth is the best antidote to the venom of animism with man in the driving seat of his holistic salvation. On the other hand it is also the best antidote to the venom of western dualism where man takes care of the physical, while God takes care of the spiritual.

That surely reminds us, that above all, the best antidote is a clear understanding of the gospel of grace where there is no room for man's initiative or control in regard to his destiny; where the way of power (any kind of power—spiritual, secular or political) is weakness in the face of the way of the cross, the way of the Lamb who was slain!

Endnotes

1. Holistic is often used in different ways.

The etymological root is the Greek "holos" meaning "whole" or "entire." The idea is of an integrated, indivisible and irreducible whole.

2. See <http://www.papuaweb.org/dlib/s123/lenz/03.pdf>

3 This movement had several marks of millenarianism, including its prophet (a man called Sobamene), but it did not seem to be tied to a specific primal myth.

4. See *Search for Salvation: Studies in the History and Theology of Cargo Cults* by John G. Strelan, available through The Melanesian Institute.

5. I am thinking of a whole range of literature such as *Let the Earth Rejoice: A Biblical Theology of Holistic Mission* William Dyrness; *The Drama of Scripture: Finding our Place in the Biblical Story* by Craig Bartholemew and Michael Goheen; *Surprised by Hope* by N T Wright, and many others.

6. I am using the term popularized by the late Paul Hiebert in an article in *Missiology* 10:1 (January 1982, pp. 35-47) and later reprinted in *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*.

John Wilson has served for over 20 years among the Yali people of Papua, helping to establish churches, train leaders, and translate the Scriptures in the Yali language.

Two Reminders

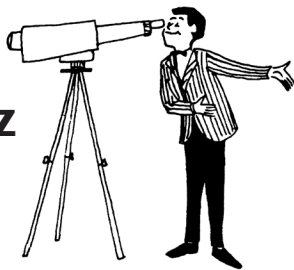
Many of you will be attending the regional conferences in your areas. Be sure to check the EMS website (www.emsweb.org) to obtain the information on dates, places, and speakers. Some regional meetings are just around the corner.

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Also, be sure to circle your calendar for the next **EMS annual conference** which is scheduled to be held in Charlotte, NC from Sept. 23-25.

Registration for conference will be available after May 1 on the Cross Global Link website. Guidelines for submitting papers to the annual conference are at the EMS website. **This year's theme is "Mosaic: Engaging the Beauty of Kingdom Diversity."**

As seen
through
the **LENZ**



Most of us are not strangers to the debate of the "wideness of God" theology, and who is included or excluded from salvation. I have asked Harold Netland to give us his perspective on the issue. Harold is currently the Professor of Religion and International Studies at Trinity International University, and served in Japan with the Evangelical Free

Church for 11 years.

Grant McClung lays out his perspective for global missions in the coming decade, with expectations that God will work in a wonderful way. Thanks to the vision of the Church of Jesus Christ, and especially the younger generation ready to serve the Lord, we can expect great things from God. You will be encouraged with his viewpoint. Thanks also to Dr. Jim Neathery for the book review by Dr. Dave Livermore.

I have also included John Wilson's experiences with the Yali people in Papua to highlight the struggles of Melanesians with the so-called "Cargo cult" or millenarianism, and how we should assess that problem. John refers to the Biak be-

lief of Koreri in his paper. I wrote my D. Miss. Project paper, developing a Biblical Theology of Missions for these cargo cult people who were part of our national church in the Bird's Head area of Papua. John's scholarly thinking will help us to assess the challenges of millenarianism for animistic societies where some may be working.

Because of the shortage of space in the last issue, I did not write any comments. But the response to Dr. Wan's paper on "Missio-Relational Reading of Romans" received high commendation from people, and requests for additional copies of that edition of *OB*. Thanks Enoch for a great job well done! ■



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