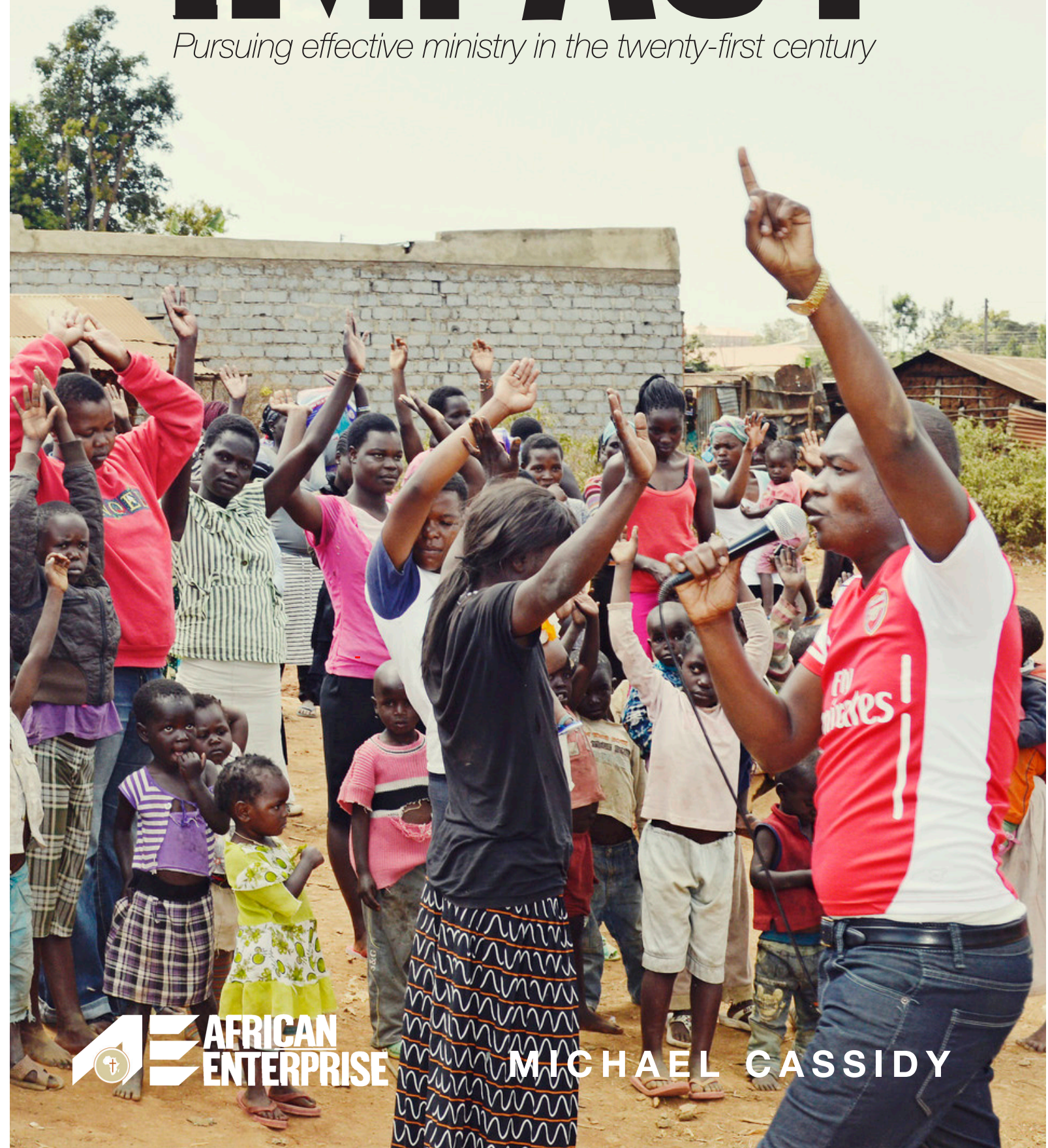


MAKING AN IMPACT

Pursuing effective ministry in the twenty-first century



**AFRICAN
ENTERPRISE**

MICHAEL CASSIDY

For John Tooke
Special Friend and Partner in the Gospel
Who has always inspired me
to pursue ministry effectiveness

Also by Michael Cassidy

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Getting to the Heart of Things

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*What on Earth are You Thinking
for Heaven's Sake?*

Light on the Way (Introduction)

A Passion for Preaching

To the Ends of the Earth (Intro)

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Seeking to be effective in Christian ministry has been for me, and remains even now, an ongoing odyssey of mind and spirit. One has not arrived. Indeed, the search for ministry effectiveness, or greater effectiveness, holds one as a Christian witness, or as a minister of the Gospel, ever tighter in its grip, especially as the challenges and obstacles to Christian effectiveness advance, multiply and deepen worldwide. The horizons are indeed darkening across the world as secular ideologies, neo-paganism, hedonism, materialism, terrorism, moral declension, ungodly redefinitional assaults on marriage to make it same-sex inclusive, the breakdown of the nuclear family, rampant divorce, plus various false gospels all lay their dread clutches on the souls of humankind.

Shine as lights

This, however, is no time for a loss of Christian nerve for we know that the Gospel is Good News against all bad news. Moreover, we know and are assured that light has shined into the world, and the darkness has not and will not overcome it (see John 1:5).

What daunts us and makes the spirit tremble, however, is that it is we – sons and daughters through Christ of the living God, yet frail creatures of dust nevertheless – are mandated by the apostle Paul to be “without fault” and to “shine as lights in the world”, in the midst of “a crooked and perverse generation” (Phil 2:15). In fact, not only are we, who were once part of the world’s darkness and now are light, to “walk as children of light” (Eph 5:8), but we are to “expose” the “unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph 5:11), to be involved in “pulling down strongholds” (2 Cor 10:4), “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:5), “reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8) and generally to be rather effective in ministry!

Paradoxically, the Calvary paradigm, and the eschatological pessimism about the Lord’s home-straight of history (see Matt 24), also alert us to the fact that we are destined at another level to be a non-triumphalist, failing community who will neither usher in Utopia, nor restore the Kingdom of God, nor produce a millennium. Rather, we will hover tantalisingly between the “already and the not yet”, with our best achievement being to manifest a rather mottled outcrop of the Kingdom of God midst a dreadfully wicked world (see 2 Tim 3:1-4), and

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probably midst an increasingly apostate Church, a Church full of “counterfeit faith” (2 Tim 3:8, RSV) where “impostors” and “deceivers” (v 13, RSV) ply their trade and “resist the truth” (v 8), “having a form of godliness but denying its power” (v 5).

Beyond that, we will know that any ministry we have, we have “by the mercy of God” (2 Cor 4:1, RSV) because we are weak and sinful. In fact we are so sinful that we have to be kept weak and earthen, if need be through a thorn in the flesh, so that His strength might be “made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9), and the transcendent power be shown to belong “to God and not to us” (2 Cor 4:7, RSV).

This is why we embrace the paradoxical posture whereby, midst our personal weakness and our pessimism about human history, we nevertheless move as people of power, hoping to search for greater ministry effectiveness in helping the Kingdom to come.

Three pre-requisites to ministry effectiveness

In this reflection, I first want to focus on *three pre-requisites to ministry effectiveness*, and then look at *two spheres of needed ministry effectiveness: evangelism and social concern*. These are my

selected areas of focus in this booklet, knowing of course that there are many others.

A clear conversion

In the nine months prior to going as an undergraduate to Cambridge, I taught in a small prep school in Johannesburg. Along with having to inflict my impoverished Latin and French on all those little rascals, I was, quite astonishingly, given Divinity! Poor things! All they got from me were the muddled mumblings of the blind seeking to lead the blind. The pit, as you might presume, was where we all landed.

Then came conversion through a friend, Robert Footner, in the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union in my first few weeks at the university. Suddenly, overnight, I had a message and could actually lead others to Christ. Ministry effectiveness had made its modest beginnings in my life because I was now a converted person, and that made all the difference. I had found Christ in a living way for myself and now longed to share Him with others.

Conversion comes in many shapes and sizes – *gradual* as in the apostle John, a *crisis* as in the apostle Paul, a *crisis at the end of a process* as in the Ethiopian eunuch, a *series of crises* as in the apostle

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Peter – and no one pattern may be declared normative for all. Nevertheless it remains true that without a definite and clear personal knowledge of Christ as Saviour and Lord, no one will have an effective ministry in the biblical sense. Indeed, it is just this lack which presents us worldwide with the pitiful spectacle of certain clergy, and even some theologians, trying to ply their trade and reproducing in others the barren spiritual confusions and wastelands which characterise their own lives and ministries.

John Wesley stands as a prime precedent. All his first efforts to evangelise Indians and colonists in Georgia in the years 1736-38 produced what one biographer called his “American Fiasco”.¹ The Moravians rightly discerned his problem, hence August Spangenberg’s insistent question to him: “Do you know Jesus Christ?” – in fact the very same question that Robert Footner put to me in Cambridge in October 1955.

In despair and ignominy Wesley left Georgia after a fruitless and abortive ministry. In his journal en route home he could write: “I went to America, to convert

¹ Garth Lean, *John Wesley, Anglican* (London: Blandford Press, 1964), 24.

the Indians; but oh! who shall convert me?... I have a fair summer religion.”²

Then came Aldersgate on May 24, 1738. The man whose heart was there “strangely warmed” now bolted from the new starting blocks to become a mighty flame of evangelistic and discipling fire whose life still touches and blesses the world daily.

The difference between ministry ineffectiveness and effectiveness lay for John Wesley in a clear conversion.

Mildred Whitcomb put it this way:

When once I took fright at God’s Name, I now understand why there are people who stand on street corners shouting the Good News about God and His Son. The Church calls it conversion. The Bible calls it New Birth. I call it miracle. For that is what happened to me.³

² Percy Livingstone Parker, ed., *The Journal of John Wesley* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 53. Wesley’s entry is from January 24, 1738.

³ Quoted in David Wesley Soper, *These Found the Way* (Westminster Press, 1951); quoted in Stanley Jones, *Conversion* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1966), 48.

A good theological training

There are those who have effective ministries without good theological training. It would in my view, however, always hugely enhance a called person's effectiveness to get a good, formal theological training under Bible-honouring lecturers. In my own experience, although I am no theologian, I nevertheless remain deeply grateful for my four years at Fuller Theological Seminary in California.

The other side of the coin is evidenced when good people are sent to bad theological colleges. A prominent Anglican leader told me of some twenty-five ministers once under his ecclesiastical oversight. "About twenty-three out of twenty-five," he said, "had had a reasonable conversion years previously but *had been ruined by their theological colleges.*" I have seen this sort of thing again and again.

The unbelieving theologian

This ruin usually starts with that chief menace and scoundrel, the unbelieving theologian, who has got ensconced in a theological college where he or she can permanently imperil the ministry effectiveness of countless students committed to his or her charge. Such "pervasive unbelief that makes its way into ecclesiastical circles" is rightly described by American

religious historian Martin Marty as one of the “enemies of theology”.⁴ I would add that this person is probably the chief enemy of the Church as a whole.

The trouble is that this teacher produces after his or her kind. German theologian Helmut Thielicke, who could both lecture in theology and fill a church with his preaching, describes the young person who could at one time lead an effective Bible study in his youth group, and who then goes off to theological college. When he returns after his third semester, he and his theological friends are invited once again to lead a Bible study. A question is raised. The young man and his other young theological “pros” feel summoned to the theological battle-ground:

With lances lowered and at a rattling gallop, with their lips painfully locked, hardly repressing a howl of triumph, they pounce upon him. Then the technical terms fly around the uninitiated ears of the unhappy layman. They rattle upon him words like “synoptic tradition,” “hermeneutical principle,” “realized eschatology,” “prophetic fore-shortening of the time perspective,”... so that he hastily runs for

⁴ Martin E. Marty, in the introduction to Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), xii.

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cover, with one hand held up to protect his face and the other raising the white flag.⁵

They, poor things, imagine they have engaged in a piece of “effective ministry”. But how far from the truth they are! Adds Thielicke:

[T]hey easily suppose that this truce, owing to helplessness, is victory and that they have convinced the other man. But in fact, instead of winning him over, they have merely applied a kind of shock therapy – only it was never “therapy”. They have smothered the first little flame of a man’s own spiritual life and a first shy question with the fire extinguisher of their erudition.⁶

The student with the question – now “smothered and strangled” – replies:

Although my fate and my life were at stake, those others came at me with their routine. I found in them no trace of life or truths learned by experience. I smelled only corpses of lifeless ideas.⁷

⁵ Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 13-14.

⁶ Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 14.

⁷ Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 14.

Diabolical theology

This, says Thielicke in a later chapter, is “diabolical theology” which has become a “coat of mail which crushes us and in which we can freeze to death”⁸ along with the theologian who has thus trafficked his wares. And what makes the difference between “sacred theology” and “diabolical theology” is the “hands and hearts which further it”.⁹ If these be proud, unbending, sceptical, naturalistic, irreverent or, worse still, bent on reinterpreting Scripture to make it say what it does not say, then the damage is done.

Alongside this theological arrogance often comes the undermining of Scriptural authority and the uniqueness of Jesus as God incarnate. As the reliability of Scripture is torpedoed, Jesus becomes ranged as part of a pantheon of religious options. Take your pick. Any will do. They all lead to the same place. Sincerity is all that counts. But try that on your medicine cupboard or in the cockpit of a 747! Yet the bad theologian will try it in his classroom and then the young pastor, having tried it in his congregation, wonders why he suffers from ministry ineffectiveness.

⁸ Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 36.

⁹ Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 37.

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In the foreword to his classic book, *Ring of Truth*, New Testament translator J B Phillips castigates those theologies and seminary teachers who have given the ordinary layman “the impression that the New Testament is no longer historically reliable”. He says:

What triggered off my anger (righteous, I trust) against some of our “experts” is this. A clergyman, old, retired, useless if you like, took his own life because his reading of the “new theology” [...] finally drove him, in his loneliness and ill-health, to conclude that his own life’s work had been founded upon a lie. He felt that these highly-qualified writers and speakers must know so much more than he that they must be right. Jesus Christ did not really rise from the dead and the New Testament, on which he had based his life and ministry, was no more than a bundle of myths.

That made me angry, and I remembered the terrible words of Jesus which, in effect, say that a man would be better off dead than cause one of “his little ones to stumble”. For many years it has been my solid purpose to communicate the truth of the Christian gospel. I am *not* concerned to distort or dilute the Christian faith so that modern undergraduates, for example, can accept it without a murmur. I am concerned with the truth revealed in and through Jesus Christ. Let the modern world conform to him, and never let us dare to try to make him fit into our

clever-clever modern world. I am no anti-intellectual, any more than St. Paul, who wrote so penetratingly that “the world by wisdom knew not God”. But I say quite bluntly that some of the intellectuals (by no means all, thank God!) who write so cleverly and devastatingly about the Christian faith appear to have no personal knowledge of the living God.¹⁰

Modernity and Postmodernity

In my own observations of the wrong sort of theological teachers, I feel their guilt lies in a false bowing at the idolatrous shrines of Modernity, Postmodernity and political correctness, all of which produce this damage. Of course, the pastor’s concern to reach modern people must on the one hand mean that theology can never be too modern, in that it must be packaged and repackaged to reach each new generation of contemporaries. But the whole endeavour aborts if modernity for its own sake is made the chief criterion and becomes an end in itself.

Perhaps a few words here of definition would be appropriate. First of all, Modernity. Modernism, often considered to be the period from 1790 to 1990, was in many ways the period of reaction away from

¹⁰ J B Phillips, *Ring of Truth* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1967), 7-8; italics his.

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authority, especially the authority of the Church and the Bible. Autonomous human reason was made king and traditional authorities, especially of Christ and the Christian Scriptures, became viewed as suspect and unreliable. Humankind, not God, took centre-stage.

American sociologist James Davison Hunter puts it this way:

Modernity [...] posits an understanding and ordering of the world through an autonomous and human rationality. This plays out at two levels. At a philosophical level, rationality assumes the only reality to be that which can be appropriated empirically by the senses. This reality can be explained logically and scientifically in an ordered system of rationally-derived propositions. Such an assumption slams the door on the very idea of transcendence/supernatural. The world of Nature, of which humanity is part, is all there is. It is the task of the sciences to explain this world.

Explanation, however, is not enough. It is essential to achieve mastery over the world through the practical application of rational controls on all aspects of everyday life, in our solving of the great human dilemmas, in our ordering of social relationships in organizations, in our rational

management of everything from the day's activities to the next ten years of a career.¹¹

Autonomous human reason, though, led not to Utopia but to a dramatic dramatisation of the flawed and sinful nature of human beings operating without God. All this led, as I have noted elsewhere, to

two world wars, the Holocaust killing chambers of Auschwitz and Belsen, plus the Russian Gulags under Stalin, in which millions died. Then on all sides there was seen to be rampant despair, moral weightlessness, profound human anxiety, a deep sense of centrelessness and meaninglessness, plus a relational and sexual revolution that had reduced much of life to a psychological and emotional shambles.

Autonomous human reason had certainly proved itself to be intellectually brilliant, but it had brought the world to the very edge of the abyss at all sorts of levels. In a sense it revealed Modernity as exhausted and bankrupt. A reaction was on the way and disillusionment in the air. The godlessness and barrenness of rationalism and intellectualism and all

¹¹ James D. Hunter, "What is modernity? Historical roots and contemporary features" in Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, eds., *Faith and Modernity* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1994), 17.

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it brought with it began to produce a profound questioning.¹²

From this profound questioning came Postmodernism, where truth and morals become unsure, uncertain and drawn not from Universals, but from the local as expressed in individual communities. Thus there is no single truth, but many different truths and sets of ethics as locally defined. Radical relativism becomes the order of the day, with tolerance as the ultimate virtue, and intolerance (i.e., this is true and that is untrue, this is right and that is wrong) as the ultimate sin.

Prof Alister McGrath of Wycliffe, College, Oxford, notes that Postmodernism stems from

the collapse of [the] confidence in reason, and a more general disillusionment with the so-called “modern” world. Postmodernism is the intellectual movement which proclaims [...] that the Enlightenment rested on fraudulent intellectual foundations (such as the belief in the omnicompetence of human reason).¹³

¹² Michael Cassidy, *Getting to the Heart of Things – Reflections on Christian Basics* (Vereeniging, South Africa: Christian Art Publishers, 2005), 157.

¹³ Alister E. McGrath, *A Passion for Truth* (Leicester, England: Apollos – Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 164.

Os Guinness, an insightful cultural analyst, put it this way:

Where Modernism was a manifesto of human self-confidence and self-congratulation, Postmodernism is a confession of modesty, if not despair. There is no truth; only truths. There is no grand reason; only reasons. There is no privileged civilisation (or culture, belief, norm and style); only a multiplicity of cultures, beliefs, norms and styles. There is no universal justice; only interests and the competition of interest groups. There is no grand narrative of human progress; only countless stories of where people and their cultures are now. There is no simple reality or any grand objectivity of universal, detached knowledge; only a ceaseless representation of everything in terms of everything else.¹⁴

Clearly if a minister, Christian worker or ordinary layperson embraces a Modernism which makes humankind the measure of all things, or Human Reason the final arbiter of truth; or if he or she flies by the lights of Postmodernism where Truth and Ethics are made relative and tolerance of anything and everything is the final arbiter of intellectual and moral

¹⁴ Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1994), 105.

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behaviour, *then* any hopes for real biblical ministry effectiveness will vanish like the morning mist.

Thus it has to be that one of the consequences of bowing at these false shrines of Modernity (enthroning Reason), or Postmodernity (enthroning Relativism), or Political Correctness (enthroning Postmodern culture and the spirit of the age) is the catastrophe of theological students hearing from their lecturers that they may set aside any aspects of New Testament teaching on belief, ethics, behaviour or marriage which do not fit modern man's naturalistic presuppositions.

Interestingly enough, Helmut Thielicke once again feels that

This sort of modern theology has always been with us. It is nothing new; it goes back two thousand years. Again and again the package of divine truth has been opened and everything which didn't suit was laid aside. Over and over, the figure of Jesus has been horribly amputated until he fit the Procrustean bed^[15] of what one particular age held to be

¹⁵ Procrustean: "seeking to enforce or establish conformity, e.g. to a policy or doctrine, by arbitrary and often violent means. [Latin *Procrustes*, name of a mythical robber of ancient Greece who forced his victims to fit a certain bed by stretching them or lopping off their legs, from Greek *Prokroustes*, literally 'stretcher']" From

“modern” concepts. In the first centuries he was shaped according to the Greek logos concept and made to square with philosophy. During the Enlightenment he was made into a rational being, under idealism an idea, in liberal protestantism a teacher of morality, and by the existentialists a Socrates who reveals the depths of human existence to us. Through the whole history of the church Jesus Christ has suffered a process of repeated crucifixion. He has been scourged and bruised and locked in the prison of countless systems and philosophies. Treated as a body of thought, he has literally been lowered into conceptual graves and covered with stone slabs so that he might not arise and trouble us any more.¹⁶

The German theologian then puts this shattering question:

Isn't the history of Christianity the sum of the fatal misunderstandings which have arisen over Jesus Christ? Isn't the history of the church to the present day one vast experiment gone awry, a dreadful victory of the currently “modern” over the Nazarene who must bear it all helplessly and silently?¹⁷

Robert Allen, consultant editor, *The New Penguin English Dictionary* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 1111.

¹⁶ Thieliicke, *How Modern Should Theology Be?* (London: Fontana Books, 1970), 18; italics are Thieliicke's.

¹⁷ Thieliicke, *How Modern Should Theology Be?*, 19.

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All this being so, the fact that so much thinking of this sort emanates from our theological seminaries and university departments of religion means that those who would seek greater ministry effectiveness for the ministers and pastors of the Church today must take long, hard looks at the matter of theological training and at the kind of theologians into whose hands they are entrusting the rising generation of clergy and Christian workers. I believe senior leaders in the Church need to give this matter urgent attention.

If the first two ideal necessities for ministry effectiveness, especially in ministers and pastors, are a sound conversion and a good biblical theological training, then the third is a well-disciplined personal life.

A well-disciplined personal life

Ah! Here now comes the rub. Who of us in ministry does not know Paul's lament within our own souls? "For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practise; but what I hate, that I do ... for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find" (Romans 7:15, 18).

We know, however, that we can never rest with our personal lives in disarray, nor can we ever have any effective ministry if they are not right. Even as “the Word became flesh” in Jesus, so must every word in Christian ministry become flesh if effectiveness is to be achieved. No wonder Paul could first exhort Timothy: “Take heed to yourself” before he pressed on him to take heed to what he taught (1 Tim 4:16). Personal life preceded doctrinal faithfulness. Yet what struggles beset each one of us here! We long for greater effectiveness in ministry but we know that again and again we torpedo that coveted reality by the sinfulness and undisciplined nature of our personal lives.

Over the years 1971 to 1980, I had the huge privilege of several brief periods of study, including one of three months, under the late and great Bishop Stephen Neill. Whenever I saw him after a spell away he would sit me down and ask me to mark myself out of 20 points in the following areas of my life:

1. devotion
2. diligence
3. study
4. priorities
5. personal relations

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A score of more than sixteen produced a grunt of approval, while any score below twelve was accounted weak, and produced strong rebuke. A score of nine or below earned one a verbal flagellation. And I got a few!

For Bishop Neill it mattered not how many missions African Enterprise had lined up, or how many conferences I was speaking at if I was failing in these areas of discipleship and personal life. Ministry effectiveness began in these hidden places, he believed.

Devotional life

Significantly enough, pride of place went to one's *devotional life*. He deplored the minister, evangelist, missionary or theological lecturer whose ministry was not born and daily nourished on the Bible, prayer and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

One great churchman once said: "If I wished to humble anyone, I should question him about his prayers. I know nothing to compare with this topic for its sorrowful self-confessions."¹⁸ Yet curiously, most of us, even those seeking an effective ministry,

¹⁸ Dean C J Vaughan, quoted in J Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1967), 75.

have a curious aversion to prayer, even though we know that

Prayer moves the arm
That moves the world
To bring deliverance down

In any event, what delights and what fresh power descend upon us when we conquer our reluctance and keep a strong prayer life in motion!

Thus could the biographer of the great Samuel Chadwick record:

He was essentially a man of prayer. Every morning he would be astir shortly after six o'clock, and he kept a little room which was his private sanctum for his quiet hour before breakfast. He was mighty in public prayer because he was constant in private devotion ... When he prayed he expected God to do something. "I wish I had prayed more," he wrote toward the end of his life, "even if I had worked less; and from the bottom of my heart I wish I had prayed better."¹⁹

Could we not each one echo such a lament? I had the privilege of travelling with John Stott around South

¹⁹ *Samuel Chadwick*, 19, quoted in Sanders, 76.

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Africa in 1988, and found myself constantly challenged in this area. No matter how early I awoke to answer either the calls of nature or grace or both, John's light was always on! And I discovered that by 5am each day he was with his Lord in prayer and study of the Word. Then later in the day I would observe the effectiveness of his ministry, and while others wondered how and why, I knew!

Diligence and study

Stephen Neill's next two litmus tests for ministry effectiveness were *diligence* and *study*. By diligence he meant serious and dedicated application to the task in hand. There was no place in the ministry for laziness or slackness. Effective ministry for him came forth from those who would work while others frittered, pray while others played and study while others slept. I generally found with the bishop that my study score was the lowest, and he would fulminate on this – even when I felt I had done reasonably!

I recollect in Nairobi in 1976 having an extended chat one evening with Billy Graham in his hotel room during PACLA, the Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly. I asked him what he would do differently if he had his life all over again. "If I had my life over again," said the great evangelist, "I would study more

– and I would cut out everything secondary.” Then he added with a twinkle: “You know, laying foundation stones and all that sort of thing!” Donald Grey Barnhouse, the legendary pastor of the great Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, once said: “If I had only three years to serve the Lord, I would spend two of them studying and preparing.”²⁰

John Stott, in his superb volume, *I Believe in Preaching*, writes:

If we are to build bridges into the real world, and seek to relate the Word of God to the major themes of life and the major issues of the day, then we have to take seriously both the biblical text and the contemporary scene. We cannot afford to remain on either side of the cultural divide. To withdraw from the world into the Bible (which is escapism), or from the Bible into the world (which is conformity), will be fatal to our preaching ministry. Either mistake makes bridge-building impossible and non-communication inevitable. Instead, it is our responsibility to explore the territories on both sides of the ravine until we become thoroughly familiar with them. Only then shall we discern the connections between them and be able to speak the divine Word to the human situation with any degree

²⁰ Quoted in John Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1982), 181.

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of sensitivity and accuracy. Such exploration means study.²¹

Clearly for both Neill and Stott, those who would be effective ministers of the Word need to remain students all their lives, and subscribe to John Calvin's possibly slightly overstated dictum that "None will ever be a good minister of the Word of God unless he is first of all a scholar."²² C H Spurgeon put it this way: "He who no longer sows in the study will no more reap in the pulpit."²³

Our diligence and study, however, dare not move directly from the isolated ivory tower of the study or lecture room into the pulpit. That only produces the ministry of the purely cognitive and cerebral against which many have so justifiably reacted. Our study of the Word should take us to the noisy street, to the hospital bed, to the coalface of political, social or physical need and thence via the place of prayer and further reflection back to the pulpit of proclamation.

²¹ Stott, 180.

²² From Calvin's commentary on Deuteronomy 5:23 ff, quoted in Stott, 180.

²³ Spurgeon, *All-Round Ministry*, 236, quoted in Stott, 180.

Priorities and personal relations

Stephen Neill's next test was *right priorities*, a category we can take with his fifth concern, for *right relationships*. By this he meant the need to manifest a properly ordered life, with a carefully synchronised balance between the demands of one's God-given calling and the importance of having all life's basic relationships rightly working.

Though I never discussed it with him, I think he would have approved of the priority line once presented to me by a friend in Washington, DC, who said:

We need to put our relationship with Jesus first, with our spouse and families second, and with our friends and colleagues third. Fourth comes the work of witness. And only finally one's organisation.

Most of us get close to getting this all the other way round. In fact one frenzied and frustrated minister to whom I put that line replied:

You could invert that order exactly for me and that would be my life. The church and its committees come first, then my preaching and teaching work, then my friends and colleagues, then my family, who get the dregs of my time, and finally the Lord with whom I spend almost no time.

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Weeks after sharing his lament with me he died of a heart attack.

Perhaps out of this latter tale one might highlight four things: *calling, family life, management and the “indispensable requirement”, i.e., the fullness of the Holy Spirit.*

CALLING

First, each person in ministry needs to be true to his or her calling and not come aside to “serve tables” (Acts 6:2), unless the serving of tables or its equivalent *is* one’s calling. Most in Christ’s work lead inordinately busy lives. Nothing is easier than to be side-tracked from the ministry of the Word and prayer into endless committees and organisational wheel-spinning. Says Paul to Timothy: “fulfil your ministry” (2 Tim 4:5), and be careful, like the soldier, not to get “entangled in civilian pursuits” (2 Tim 2:4, RSV). For Jesus, His joy was being able to affirm to the Father: “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do” (John 17:4). If God gives us the cabbage patch to work, we must not spend and be spent on the rose garden. I can’t think of anything worse than finally facing the Lord and hearing Him declare one’s labours mis-focussed and therefore, in terms of His “Plan A”, to be pronounced “wood, hay, straw” (1 Cor 3:12).

FAMILY LIFE

Point two from the tale of the upside-down minister relates to family life. He just could not give his family adequate time. Most of us know the problem. Yet it need not defeat us. To plan our year, our week and our individual days to make room for family time and recreation is the starting point. This allocated time needs to be diarised, guarded and fought for like a tigress for her cubs. Even with this there will be failure, as I know full well. But without it there will be potential disaster. For nothing torpedoes an effective ministry more lethally than a home which at one level or another is falling apart.

MANAGEMENT

Point three from the upside-down minister lies in the need all of us have in Christian ministry to know something of the art of management, and certainly time management. He was being kindly killed off by committees. At seminary, few of us are ever told we will need any executive or management skills if we are to have an effective ministry. Nor are we taught any. So we struggle along, learning here and there, and coping by trial and error – mainly error! The problem is that the minister or Christian worker who lacks executive ability to any marked degree, however spiritual he or she may be, will not be able to translate vision into action.

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Oswald Sanders, in his classic book *Spiritual Leadership*, noted

Lord Macaulay said that John Wesley had a genius for government not inferior to that of Cardinal Richelieu. The genius of his organization is still seen in the church which he founded. It is owing to his superb executive ability and powers of organization that the movement remained unshaken even when deprived of his presence and guidance.

His judgment of men, his skill in using them, his power to employ them to the best advantage and to attach them to himself in loyal submission to his authority amounted to genius and saved the movement from the most serious dangers.²⁴

While we can't all be Wesleys, at the least we need to develop some administrative skills (see Proverbs 11:14). This will also call for a "post-Jethro" ministry in which we learn the art of delegation. In fact, one definition of leadership is "the ability to recognize the special abilities and limitations of others, combined with the capacity to fit each one into the job where he [or she] will do his [or her] best".²⁵

²⁴ Sanders, 69.

²⁵ Sanders, 127.

THE INDISPENSABLE REQUIREMENT

Perhaps overarching all these qualities, the effective minister of the Gospel needs what Sanders calls “the indispensable requirement”, namely the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Says Sanders simply: “Spiritual leadership can be exercised only by Spirit-filled men [and women].”²⁶ Then he adds:

Appointment of [people] with a secular or materialistic outlook prevents the Holy Spirit from carrying out His programme for the church in the world.

The Holy Spirit does not take control of any man or body of men against their will. When He sees men elected to positions of leadership who lack spiritual fitness to cooperate with Him He quietly withdraws and leaves them to implement their own policy according to their own standards, but without His aid.²⁷

In this regard, the heated charismatic and anti-charismatic debates over proper vocabulary relating to the Spirit’s work will often be futile. The thing is to press through to the reality – whether it be labelled the Baptism in the Spirit or the fullness of the Spirit –

²⁶ Sanders, 70.

²⁷ Sanders, 71.

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so that our ministries gain new effectiveness as we seek to be marked by the Spirit's walk and way. Along with that will also come a manifestation of both His fruit (Gal 5:22) and His gifts (1 Cor 12 and 14). Otherwise we end up illustrating the lament made by Patriarch Athenagoras of the Orthodox Church: "We have made the Church an organization like any other ... it goes, more or less, really mostly less, but it goes. Only it goes like a machine, not like something alive."²⁸ This being so, the person who seeks ministry effectiveness will register some great words spoken in 1968 at the Ecumenical Council of Churches meeting in Uppsala by Metropolitan Ignatios of Latakia:

Without the Holy Spirit, God is far away,
Christ stays in the past,
the Gospel is a dead letter,
the Church is simply an organisation,
authority a matter of domination,
mission a matter of propaganda,
the liturgy no more than an evocation,
Christian living a slave morality.

²⁸ Quoted in Olivier Clément, *Dialogues Avec Le Patriarche Athénagoras* (Paris: Fayard, 1969), 154.

But in the Holy Spirit:
the cosmos is resurrected and groans with
the birth pangs of the Kingdom,
the risen Christ is there,
the Gospel is the power of life,
the Church shows forth the life of the Trinity,
authority is a liberating service,
mission is a Pentecost,
the liturgy is both memorial and anticipation,
human action is deified.²⁹

In sum, ministry effectiveness is a good which is much to be desired. But it does not fall from the high heavenlies into the lap of every sincere soul who would casually covet it. It comes to those who seek it and pay some price for it. In my own judgement, at the least this will generally involve – though some glorious exceptions challenge the rule – a *clear conversion*, a *good theological training* and a *well-disciplined personal life*.

With these in place, the Lord's servant will seek ministry effectiveness in the spheres of mission, evangelism, worship and service. However, I want now to highlight two dimensions, namely evangelism and socio-political concern, and the battle for balance

²⁹ Quoted in Léon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, *A New Pentecost?* (New York, The Seabury Press, 1974), 19-20.

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in these two areas. BBC, as some have called it – i.e., Balanced Biblical Christianity – should always be the aim of any engaged in Christian ministry.

Two spheres in which to seek ministry effectiveness

Evangelism

It is sad to say, but true, that many in the modern Church are happy to be fixated in a hopelessly unbalanced way on everything under the sun except evangelism. Thus evangelism is relegated to the category of the irrelevant, or the pious, or the intimidating and set on one side while more pressing matters of social concern or church maintenance hold sway.

This being so, we must cry out vigorously to one section of the modern Church that evangelism must yet retain pride of place in our witness if we would be true to our Lord and His Great Commission. On the other side we call on more conservative Christians who are strong on evangelism to embrace a biblical socio-political concern and compassionate action as part of a holistic ministry and witness.

Turning to the Old Testament we find the powerfully pregnant word of Proverbs: “he who wins souls is

wise” (Proverbs 11:30). In the New Testament there is the command of Jesus: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15) and the word of Paul: “Do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim 4:5). Of course, the whole book of Acts is also a story of evangelism.

Evangelism is not there only as the labour of the professional. It was the primary task laid upon the whole early Church, and it still is. Michael Green puts it this way:

Evangelism is not an optional extra for those who like that kind of thing. It is not an acceptable pastime for the person who likes making a fool of himself on a soap box in the open air, or titillating his ego by addressing a large gathering in a public hall. Evangelism is sharing the good news of what God has done for us all. It is the sacred duty of every Christian.³⁰

Green then adds:

Evangelism is not the task of the ordained ministry alone. It is not primarily their task at all. They are meant to preach and teach the faith, but by the very

³⁰ Michael Green, *Evangelism – Now and Then* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979), 14.

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nature of things they are not in such close contact with agnostics as most members of their churches are from Monday to Saturday. There is no hint among ancient records that the early church saw evangelism as the task of the leadership alone. All were called to pass on the good news. It was too good to leave to the professionals.³¹

In other words, whoever would seek to be true to Christ and to seek a more effective witness, whether in the ordained ministry or out of it, cannot and dare not bypass this holy obligation. In order to do it more effectively we need to begin by knowing what evangelism is – and isn't.

First of all, evangelism is not everything the Church is sent to do. This latter we subsume under the rubric of “mission”. Teaching, counselling, protesting, liberating, caring, pastoring – all are part of mission. But, secondly, evangelism is that unique dimension of mission geared to the proclamation of the Evangel (Greek: *euangelion*, e.g., Gal 1:11) to those who have not heard it, or have not responded to it, or have not understood it, or have forgotten it. Thus not all mission is evangelism. But all evangelism is mission, albeit only one aspect of it.

³¹ Green, 15.

The Gospel is preached

Speaking at the South African Congress on Mission and Evangelism in Durban in 1973, Canon Douglas Webster, then of St Paul's Cathedral in London, noted:

In the great majority of the 76 occurrences of the word gospel in the New Testament the verb that goes with it is to preach... Just as a game is something you normally play, so the gospel is something you normally preach.³²

I believe that to be so. Indeed, Helmut Thielicke, if we may come back to him, affirms that the critical criterion of every theology is that "it must be preachable, because its very origin is in preaching."³³ In fact, the test of a good theologian, in my view, is whether he or she can preach a good Gospel sermon to convert an outsider or write a simple Gospel tract to win an unbeliever! But, as Thielicke also notes,

the gospel must be preached afresh and told in new ways to every generation, since every generation has its own unique questions. This is why the gospel must constantly be forwarded to a new address,

³² Canon Douglas Webster, "What is Evangelism?", in Michael Cassidy, ed., *I Will Heal Their Land* (Maseru, Lesotho: Africa Enterprise, 1974), 88.

³³ Thielicke, *How Modern Should Theology Be?*, 86.

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because the recipient is repeatedly changing his place of residence.³⁴

There is here, then, a “fixed deposit of truth” (Greek: *kerygma*, e.g., 1 Cor 1:21) which is communicated to the seeking person, and there is also the context, or “new address”, at which the seeker resides.³⁵ The preaching produces an interplay between text and context, on which more in a moment.

As to the *kerygmatic* message it could, I believe, be summarised in a simple 1-2-3-4 outline. It involves the communication of:

1. *ONE EVENT*

The Jesus Event (Acts 8:35): His life, death, resurrection and return. Interestingly, even C H Dodd included the Parousia (i.e., Jesus’ Second Coming) within the *kerygma*³⁶

³⁴ Thielicke, *How Modern Should Theology Be?*, 10.

³⁵ For a fuller explanation and examination of the *kerygma*, see *A Passion for Preaching* by Michael Cassidy. Available from African Enterprise.

³⁶ C H Dodd elaborated the *kerygma* as follows: 1. The age of fulfilment has dawned; 2. This happened in the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus; 3. Jesus has been exalted to God’s right hand as the head of the new Israel; 4. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the sign of Christ’s present power; 5. There will be a consummation of the age in the return of Christ; 6. The preaching ends with an appeal for repentance and faith, the offer of forgiveness, salvation

2. *TWO OFFERS*

- the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38a)
- the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38b)

3. *THREE DEMANDS*

The Kingdom is at hand (Mark 1:15a); therefore:

- repent (Mark 1:15)
- believe (Mark 1:15)
- follow (John 1:43)

4. *FOUR NEW RELATIONSHIPS*

- with God (Eph 2:4-6; 1 Peter 2:9-10)
- with oneself (Matt 22:39)
- with the Church (Acts 2:47)
- with the world (Mark 16:15)

Differently and more simply, we could say that we present a *historical proclamation*, a *theological explanation* and a *spiritual and moral summons*. We present the story of Jesus Christ, we explain it, and we urge a response to it.

While many of us know the message of evangelism, however, we battle to get it through effectively. To be

and the promised Holy Spirit. From C H Dodd, *The Apostolic Teaching and Its Development* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1963), 17.

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sure, I know I do. Perhaps the reason for this lies in failure to understand our context adequately and adapt not the “*esse*” – i.e., essence – of the message, but its wrapping and packaging.

In this adaptation we will at some time have to grapple with *two modern types of mega-shift*, the one relating to how we know (epistemology), what we know and how we experience life, and the other relating to where we live, no longer mostly in the rural areas but more and more in the mushrooming megacities of the world. Both these issues have been ably addressed by Os Guinness and Ray Bakke, whose thoughts I want us to register.

Contemporary culture and the Modern

Beyond what we said just now about Modernity and Postmodernity, Os Guinness has noted apropos of modernity that it is not basically the idea of modernisation in the sense of change and development. Nor is it just a description of new philosophical attacks on the faith. Rather it is the result, in the first instance, of three revolutions – the capitalist in the fifteenth century, the industrial and technological beginning mainly in the early nineteenth century, and the ideological in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Beyond that, we should note, says Guinness, that:

There is no single cause of modernity, and an infinite number of components comprising modernization. But the best way to grasp and assess modernity is to trace the development and spread of its carriers (in the sense of medical carriers of disease). “Seven deadly carriers” are of paramount importance: the capitalist market economy, the centralized bureaucratic state, the new industrial technology, rapid population growth, urbanization, the mass media, and (as soon as a critical stage is reached) globalization.³⁷

The problem with all this, observes Guinness, is that it leads to information overload, and then a state of “unknowing” brought on by “the common mentality, ‘Happiness is a small circle’” where “we know as little as we need and care as little as we can.”³⁸ Advertising, television and pop culture – the “terrible trio” – have thus produced a shift in the way people experience and understand the world. This change produces a huge challenge in our search for greater ministry effectiveness because we find ourselves dealing with a

³⁷ Os Guinness, “Mission in the face of modernity”, Martyn Eden and David F. Wells, eds., *The Gospel in the Modern World* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), 89-90.

³⁸ Guinness, in Eden and Wells, 94.

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situation where people are “blindingly aware of the last twenty-four hours, but ignorant of the last twenty-four years, let alone of history. The resulting state of mind is a form of information without wisdom and of knowing severed from doing.”³⁹ In addition, modernity has produced a “shift from word to image, action to spectacle, exposition to entertainment, truth to feeling, conviction to sentiment and authoritative utterance to discussion and sharing”, leading to a “general diminishing of any sense of ‘Thus saith the Lord’.”⁴⁰

The main danger here is that modernity has produced a hostility to the ideas of transcendence and truth. By increasing choice and change we decrease “in commitment, continuity and conviction.”⁴¹ We downplay the either-or, life-or-death dimensions of the Gospel and “up-play” a generalised syncretism. As in the supermarket with our miscellaneous purchases, so theologically and spiritually we feel we can pick and choose bits and pieces of miscellaneous religion here and there but ignore the lordship of Christ which says “give all to me, for all is mine”.

³⁹ Guinness, in Eden and Wells, 94.

⁴⁰ Guinness, in Eden and Wells, 95.

⁴¹ Guinness, in Eden and Wells, 98.

If then we are to deepen our evangelistic commitments and become more effective in ministry, this shift in the way people think, feel, understand and protect themselves from serious commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ is going to have to be faced more resolutely than ever.

Urbanisation

The second big shift we have to grapple with relates to the massive move of the planet's peoples to the cities.

In our African Enterprise ministry we have understood our calling to be the evangelisation of the cities of Africa. But our effectiveness in doing this has been exceedingly modest, relative to the magnitude of the task. We have focussed on "event"-type, short-term evangelistic happenings. And these are not insignificant, unimportant or ineffective. But I am convinced now that if we are to make better progress we need to hear the kind of challenge urban expert Ray Bakke brings. We will have to wrestle much more fully with urban issues if we are to be ready for new ministry effectiveness in any way for the Africa and the world of tomorrow. Bakke puts it this way: "A reflective reading of the biblical urban texts requires

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that we have a vision *for* the city as well as *of* the city.”⁴² He goes on:

The biblical picture of God is one that grapples with the total environment. He is the God who gets glory *in spite* of Pharaoh and *because* of Cyrus. This is the God who directed the building and occupation of cities in the past, and who integrates the creative and redemptive threads in a kingdom agenda of which the church is both sign and agent. It is this large picture of God that gives us permission, yet requires us, to get our heads and our hearts around the great cities of the world.⁴³

In other words, we all need to understand the cities where we labour not only spiritually and morally but sociologically so that our evangelism goes truly and with maximum transforming effect to the polar points of need. It not only creates an event by which some souls are won, but triggers an ongoing chemistry of transformational process by which the city can be changed and brought more fully under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

⁴² Ray Bakke, “A Theology as Big as the City”, in Harvie Conn, ed., *Urban Mission* (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1989), 8; italics his.

⁴³ Bakke, 9; italics his.

In this understanding, our mechanisms of discipling inquirers will need fresh scrutiny. Instead of teaching people just to have assurance of salvation, plus a regular quiet time, we will have to help them bring spirit and matter more into convergence. Each Christian will need to see himself or herself as “a power-unit”, which will translate private faith into public action for the Christian transformation of the city. Indeed the whole evangelistic enterprise worldwide must grapple afresh with the ongoing mobilisation of the layperson for effective witness of every sort.

Interestingly enough, when I was at the Lausanne II Congress in Manila in 1989, all those won to Christ by the witness or efforts of an individual layperson were asked to stand. By far the majority of the Congress stood, thereby revealing individual personal witness as by far the most effective means of evangelisation. I tested this a few weeks later in a South African group with the same result. So the use, misuse, or non-use of the layperson, along with many other challenges, face each of us who is concerned for greater ministry effectiveness in evangelism in the twenty-first century.

Socio-political concern and compassionate care

In terms of maintaining proper balances, the Christian faith is fraught with hazard, not least in the area of socio-political concern, and the proper Christian expression of compassionate care in all things societal.

The history of the Church, certainly in more recent times, gives full credence to the perilous path the Christian is called on to follow. Thus it was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that Protestantism lost its biblical balance. While cleaving to a proper social concern for the upliftment of all mankind, theological liberalism abandoned and betrayed that biblical faithfulness which upheld the deity of Jesus, the supernatural dimensions of Scripture, and the primacy of evangelism and missionary outreach. While properly embracing the Great Commandment to love the world, theological liberals in large measure improperly forsook the Great Commission to evangelise the world. They seemed to believe the Kingdom of God on earth could be brought in merely by political and economic endeavours, together with social protest. As the Church tends to live and theologise at the extremities of an oscillating pendulum of theological reaction, it was not surprising that evangelicals not only reacted

but over-reacted, thus tossing out the baby of social concern with the bathwater of liberal theology. The commitment to social action as historically embraced by evangelicals, such as John Wesley, William Wilberforce and Lord Shaftesbury, was jettisoned in what American theologian David Moberg called “the great reversal”, in a book of the same title.⁴⁴

This reversal was tragic but not wholly beyond understanding. For while the so-called “social gospellers” were neglecting the imperative of taking the Good News of salvation for sinners to the ends of the earth, evangelicals inevitably felt with new intensity the huge burden and responsibility for world mission and evangelism. The legitimacy of their passion for world mission, however, did not excuse the illegitimacy of their developing neglect of societal issues.

Neo-evangelicalism

Thankfully, the pendulum began to swing again with the arrival on the scene in the 1950s of men like Carl Henry in North America and John Stott in Britain. Henry and Fuller Theological Seminary, of which he

⁴⁴ David O Moberg, *The Great Reversal – Evangelism versus Social Concern* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972).

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was a founding faculty member, saw themselves as representing a form of “neo-evangelicalism”.

In 1947, Henry published a book called *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*.⁴⁵ He was not prepared to allow a comfortable spectating of all the world’s ills just as “signs of the end-times”. So he affirmed that “while the Lord tarries, the gospel is still relevant to every problem that vexes two billion inhabitants of an apprehensive globe.”⁴⁶ More than that, he castigated the so-called fundamentalists of the 1930s for developing a “disastrous isolation from the questions on which the future direction of civilization hung”. For, in his view, they had not only ignored the philosophical challenges that Christianity could bring against the prevailing cultural views, but they were also ready to “fall all over each other in the rush to make it clear that they have no message which is relevant to modern political, sociological, economic and educational tensions.”⁴⁷ Said Henry: “It is an

⁴⁵ Carl F H Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947).

⁴⁶ Quoted in George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 77.

⁴⁷ Henry, “The Vigor of Evangelicalism”, *Christian Life*, January 1948, 30, 32; March 1948, 35; April 1948, 32; quoted in Marsden, 77-78.

application of, not a revolt against, fundamentals of the faith, for which I plead.”⁴⁸ Then he lamented: “For the first protracted period in its history, evangelical Christianity stands divorced from the great social reform movements.”⁴⁹

Thankfully, as men like Henry and Stott began to cry for evangelical reform at this point, it began to happen through the 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s. Finally it became settled evangelical orthodoxy in 1974 at the first Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation in Lausanne, Switzerland. Balance was returning. *Deo Gloria*. Thus the *Lausanne Covenant* could rightly express evangelical penitence

both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our

⁴⁸ Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, 14

⁴⁹ Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, 36.

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doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ.⁵⁰

Commenting on this balancing clause in a post-Congress symposium of essays, Athol Gill of Australia wrote:

The traditional evangelical position has been that “the renewal of the individual also reforms society”, but this tragically underestimates the existence and the power of corporate evil. Changes in the lives of individuals do not automatically lead to changes in the structures of society. As one Congress report expressed it, “Institutionalised evil requires institutional action.”⁵¹

In the 1970s and ‘80s, around the world, the Christian Church generally, and evangelical Christians specifically, pressed on further with the battle for balance, as Church leaders, pastors, evangelists and

⁵⁰ *The Lausanne Covenant*, clause 5 – Christian Social Responsibility. For the full text of the Lausanne Covenant, along with an introduction and explanatory notes by Michael Cassidy, see *To the Ends of the Earth – The Lausanne Covenant and the Challenge of Holistic Evangelism*, available from African Enterprise. The full text of the Covenant can also be found at www.lausanne.org

⁵¹ Athol Gill, “Christian Social Responsibility”, in C René Padilla, ed., *The New Face of Evangelicalism* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1976), 101.

missionaries struggled with how to work all this out practically.

Manila

Then, in the second Lausanne Congress in Manila in 1989, the Manila Manifesto caught the balances even more succinctly and perhaps also more explicitly. In a section on the Gospel and social responsibility, it states:

The authentic gospel must become visible in the transformed lives of men and women. As we proclaim the love of God we must be involved in loving service, and as we preach the kingdom of God we must be committed to its demands of justice and peace.

Evangelism is primary because our chief concern is with the gospel, that all people may have the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Yet Jesus not only proclaimed the kingdom of God. He also demonstrated its arrival by works of mercy and power. We are called today to a similar integration of words and deeds. In a spirit of humility we are to preach and teach, minister to the sick, feed the hungry, care for prisoners, help the disadvantaged and handicapped and deliver the oppressed. While we acknowledge the diversity of spiritual gifts, callings and contexts, we also affirm that good news and good works are inseparable.

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The proclamation of God's kingdom necessarily demands the prophetic denunciation of all that is incompatible with it. Among the evils we deplore are destructive violence, including institutionalized violence, political corruption, all forms of exploitation of people and of the earth, the undermining of the family, abortion on demand, the drug traffic and the abuse of human rights. In our concern for the poor, we are distressed by the burden of debt in the two-thirds world. We are also outraged by the inhuman conditions in which millions live, who bear God's image as we do.⁵²

Not overboard

The challenge, now that socio-political concern and action are back where they belong, is not to go overboard. So many situations, my own South African one included, are still heavily beset with tackling many Goliaths, including a relentless attack on marriage and the family. There is also the desperate HIV-Aids pandemic. There is therefore a ready-made danger lurking in the wings for the social, political, humanitarian and moral causes to become so overriding and compelling that in the end the Gospel and the whole work of mission become re-interpreted into

⁵² *The Manila Manifesto*, clause 4. The full text of the Manila Manifesto can be found at www.lausanne.org

socio-moral and economic categories only. Past Liberation Theology exponents came close to this.

No issue, of course, can or should be taken with the goal defined by someone like Gustavo Gutiérrez, in his epoch-making volume *A Theology of Liberation*, when he wrote of the need to act for “liberation from all that limits or keeps man from self-fulfilment, liberation from all impediments to the exercise of freedom”.⁵³ All that is well and good. And certain liberation theologians were helpful in re-introducing hope for history into the Christian perspective once again. More than that, they dared to believe that Christ is Lord, and can bring nations, groups, and governments under His righteous rule. But we cannot concede validity to any attempts to reinterpret salvation just in socio-political, economic or humanitarian categories, so that these come to be seen as the whole task of mission in the Church.

Clearly evangelical Christians have often failed by confining Christ to heavenly heights, where He only deals with individual and personal problems, and only urges us to save souls from the sinking ship of the world. Nevertheless in correcting that imbalance we

⁵³ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation – History, Politics and Salvation* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 27.

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will not go to the other extreme, noted by Emilio Núñez of El Salvador and René Padilla of Argentina, of reducing “the purpose of God in history to mere humanization” and thereby “losing sight of the ultimate cause of injustice which is within man himself.”⁵⁴

John Stott put it this way in his splendid volume, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*:

Although liberation from oppression and the creation of a new and better society are definitely God’s good will for man, yet it is necessary to add that these things do not constitute the “salvation” which God is offering the world in and through Jesus Christ. They could be included in the “mission of God”, [...] in so far as Christians are giving themselves to serve in these fields. But to call socio-political liberation “salvation” and to call social activism “evangelism” – this is to be guilty of a gross theological confusion. It is to mix what Scripture keeps distinct – God the Creator and God the Redeemer, the God of the cosmos and the God of the covenant, the world and the church, common grace and saving grace, justice and justification, the reformation of society and the regeneration of men. For the salvation offered in the gospel of Christ

⁵⁴ Emilio Núñez, *Liberation Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 80.

concerns persons rather than structures. It is deliverance from another kind of yoke than political and economic oppression.⁵⁵

Conclusion

All the above speaks of the battle for balance which is, by my lights, a major and crucial dimension in the search for effectiveness in ministry.

The pre-requisites for such ministry, as I hope we have seen, are a *clear conversion*, a *good theological training*, and a *well-disciplined personal life*. If we can add to these pre-requisites a balanced, biblical, active harmonising of vigorous *evangelism* with a deep *socio-political concern*, part of whose expression is focussed in compassionate care for Jesus' sake, then we will have made at least some meaningful strides in our vital and contemporary search for ministry effectiveness.

Ultimately, of course, our ministry effectiveness resides in the Person, power, fruit and giftings of the Holy Spirit working in and through us. It was only as the Holy Spirit fell upon and filled that early apostolic

⁵⁵ John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (London: Falcon, 1975), 95.

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group in the book of Acts that they could manifest not only “great fear” (Acts 5:11), but also both “great power” and “great grace” as “the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 4:33).

In fact, important as education and training are, the spiritual closeness of the preacher or witness to Jesus is ultimately even more critical. Hence the key factor noted by Luke the historian: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marvelled. And they realized that *they had been with Jesus*” (Acts 4:13).

So we pray: Lord Jesus, may we be *with* you so that we may be effective witnesses *for* You.

ABOUT AFRICAN ENTERPRISE

African Enterprise is a ministry sprung from African soil which firmly believes Africa will become the fulcrum of world mission in the 21st century. AE's aim of *EVANGELISING THE CITIES OF AFRICA THROUGH WORD AND DEED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CHURCH* is contributing to the spiritual renewal and transformed lives of millions who have been brought to personal faith in Jesus Christ.

However, AE seeks also to demonstrate the love of Christ in powerful tangible ways. In addition to preaching the Gospel, AE's peacemaking work has been ongoing in violence-wracked Burundi since the mid-1990s, while thousands of widows and orphans out of the 1994 Rwandan genocide are assisted and ministered to. Prostitutes and street children are disciplined and given job training in Ghana, while Foxfire youth evangelists in Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe impact the lives of countless young people, equipping them to live according to biblical sexual standards, thus enabling them to avoid the ravages of the HIV/Aids epidemic.

Perhaps most remarkable was the ministry's contribution in South Africa in 1994, when AE founder Michael Cassidy played a crucial backstage role in bringing in the Kenyan diplomat who facilitated the political breakthrough which averted near-certain civil war.

AE has sought in the spirit of John 17 to be a unifying force among Christians, by spearheading the largest gatherings of Christians in Africa over the last generation, such as the South African Congress on Mission and Evangelism in Durban (1973), the Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly in Nairobi (1976 and 1994) and the South African Christian Leadership Assembly in Pretoria (1979 and 2003).

Please contact us for further information.