

## A BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR EVANGELICAL REFORM

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The most essential need for evangelical reform is a comprehensive understanding of the current problems of evangelicalism and an equally comprehensive understanding of possible solutions. If a powerful secondary word is to be proclaimed it must first be formulated in terms of both specifics of abuse of, and specifics of adherence to, a more normative Christian faith and practice. In the interest of a first-generation Christian faith, dealing with current realities and holding up of relevant models for change is an essential task. To help this task along, concerned Christians need to be aware of analysis that already exists and models for reform that have already been formulated. Toward this end the following bibliography is offered, not as a definitive list so much as simply books which I have come to feel are crying to be read by a contemporary evangelicalism in need of their message. I may have missed much in compiling these materials, but someone needs to begin speaking as a lobby for reform-mindedness of a comprehensive sort. The following, therefore, is offered as a fledgling effort.

### TOWARD A DEFINITION OF "EVANGELICAL"

The following books attempt a definition of "evangelical" and in some cases explicate both this definition, and normative evangelicalism, rather ably. This literature is rather important for those interested in evangelical reform, as it may help us to see what are—and what are not—adequate ways of approaching either the evangelical heritage or current conservative evangelicalism. It may also stimulate us to an even more profound definition than these books provide of what evangelicalism is and of what current evangelicalism thus needs to be.

There is a crying need for a definition of what conservative evangelicalism means by "evangelical." Since the conservative evangelical establishment contains both those who would be doctrinally orthodox Protestants as well as those who would be explicitly "evangelical" in the sense of early Methodism, the Great Awakening, or a similarly existential faith, there is some confusion. Both John Wesley and John Wesley's High Church opponents would fit into conservative evangelicalism on some present definitions, and this leaves one feeling decidedly uncomfortable about the precision with which anything is being defined and an evangelical reality communicated. I would like to think that by "evangelical" we mean an orthodox form of Christianity that includes an emphasis upon and an experience of regeneration, as opposed to something less than this. But I am no longer sure that this is what conservative evangelicals mean by "evangelical." The word is used

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so loosely in some segments of conservative evangelicalism that one can propose almost anything as fitting the category, while others have recently attempted to restrict its application to conservative Protestants holding one particular view of Biblical inspiration. I have the uneasy feeling that the problem of much of contemporary evangelicalism is that it has, in fact, lost any idea of what it should be and thus does not possess a clear model for its own identity. If this is true, a constituent part of the work of evangelical reform will be to provide a concrete definition of and models for what evangelicalism is to be.

Daniel B. Stevick's *Beyond Fundamentalism* (John Knox, 1964) was a powerful and relevant critique of conservative evangelicalism in the 1950's (when the letters that constitute the book were written). Unfortunately, much of Stevick's message is still needed. Neo-evangelical intellection has accomplished much over the last two decades, but little of this advance has filtered down to significantly change the evangelical establishment with its broad constituency. Grass-roots renewal has been coming up in the other direction, but the often cultic forms of such renewal, whether charismatic, fellowship or house-church orientated, or pre-packaged program (L'Abri, Billy Graham, Campus Crusade, Bill Gothard, etc.), tend to stress success, sectarian insights, and an individualism that is ill at ease with the depth of the best evangelical orthodox heritage. Stevick can thus still be read with profit by almost everyone situated in or concerned for conservative evangelicalism. Although Stevick's position on Scripture moves away from the conservative evangelical posture (and some conservative evangelicals will not be able to follow his analysis at this point), the weight of the book will ring true to realities and needs that we must face. Those evangelicals open to a reformulation of Biblical authority will find Stevick's viewpoint helpful whether they can accept his exact position or not.

A book that borders on being as potentially useful as Stevick's in discussing the problems of conservative evangelicalism is Richard Quebedeaux's *The Young Evangelicals* (Harper, 1974), which also attempts a definition and contains a helpful classification of evangelicalism. The book is less mature than it needs to be to achieve what is evidently Quebedeaux's aim (to argue for an open and catholic evangelical stance), but it is filled with specific references to conditions in evangelicalism and contains insights that are not only valuable but also essential to any reform-minded Christian. Also valuable is the recently published collection of essays edited by David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge and entitled *The Evangelicals* (Abingdon, 1975). The book evidences some confusion on the part of its contributors, both evangelical and non-evangelical, as to what is in fact evangelical. Is evangelicalism *just* doctrinal orthodoxy in the Protestant tradition, or is it also a particular view of Scripture, or is it, conceivably, an experience of grace that can exist *without* Protestant doctrinal orthodoxy, or without a particular view of Scripture? This book does not exactly answer these questions, but in suggesting some of the different possibilities it shows us what we have to tighten up in our thinking. The thrust of the essays

deals more explicitly with conservative evangelicalism than with a possibly broader evangelical spectrum.

Bernard Ramm's *The Evangelical Heritage* (Word, 1973) is a perceptive work by a mature neo-evangelical scholar. One only wishes that Ramm had expanded his treatment to reflect more on current evangelicalism and what needs to be done to restore the normative depth of the heritage that he understands so well. Ramm's commitment to reformed evangelicalism may have shaped his treatment at the expense of more fluid and experiential evangelicalism, which should not be discounted in the heritage. But this is, altogether, a fine and responsible book, not to be overlooked by reformers. Ramm's work generally stands at the center of so-called "neo-evangelical" reformulation, and he is one scholar who is specifically rethinking the nature of Biblical authority and inspiration while yet preserving conservative evangelical concerns in many areas. Ramm is thus hard to categorize, and it may not be clear exactly where he stands until the work he has set out for himself in recent years is more nearly complete. There are rumors, at least, that Ramm has not delivered his definitive word, and in that case we might well hold our judgment in expectation of "things to come."

It is the feeling of some that the definition of "evangelical" that is going to best explicate the strength and real nature of the heritage will point out the differences between a first-generation evangelical experience and mere evangelical profession in a later tradition. Donald Bloesch's *The Evangelical Renaissance* (Eerdmans, 1973) takes this tack and reacts against the incipient rationalism creeping into evangelical explication. It may be that Francis Schaeffer's *True Spirituality* (Tyndale, 1971) is thus a more normative picture of what evangelicalism really is, or ought to be, than doctrinal qualifications alone. What Ramm and Bloesch suggest, however, are by no means incompatible, as "evangelical orthodoxy" may well embody both doctrinal norms and spiritual requirements.

A moving picture of a first-generation evangelical faith and practice can be seen in two books by Leslie F. Church: *The Early Methodist People*, and *More About the Early Methodist People* (Epworth, 1949). To round out the theological concerns, see also Philip E. Hughes' *Theology of the English Reformers* (Eerdmans, 1965). Any number of other works might be cited, but it is necessary to "touch ground" adequately to appreciate the concrete faith and practice historically known as "evangelical." Without such concrete examples evangelicalism becomes a kind of abstraction. What evangelicalism is, ultimately, concerns evangelical people thinking and living in a certain way, and it will have to be a like thinking and living that will need to be restored in the place of corrupt evangelical practice today. Having earlier examples in mind is one of the things necessary as we approach issues of reform. The Reformation provides a wealth of example for such use, as do numerous movements in the history of the Church. On American soil the Great Awakening furnishes clear models for evangelical faith and practice, and we dare not neglect such sources (although the literature for these past expressions of evangelicalism

cannot be cited here). It is not too much to say that reform will only be brought by those who *know* their heritage and know it well, and this should be a sufficient admonition to us all.

### THE CONTENT OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY

The statement of historic Christian and evangelical faith in normative form is a large task, but there are some remarkably good models to help us. These cover quite a range of expression, as might be expected, and yet all constitute a loyalty to what we might consider evangelicalism to be, reduced to systematic and formal explication. Evangelicalism is not, of course, only systematically or formally to be explicated, as the above admonition has just warned. John Stott had done what many consider to be an excellent job of defining evangelical belief within the framework of historic Christian orthodoxy in *Basic Christianity* (2nd ed.: Eerdmans, 1971). Used in Inter-Varsity circles for many years, the late T. C. Hammond's *In Understanding Be Men* (6th ed.: Inter-Varsity, 1968) covers the full spectrum of Christian teaching also. More abbreviated treatments are John Lawson's *An Evangelical Faith for Today* (Abingdon, 1972), which is also similar to the Bloesch and Ramm books in its attempt to define evangelicalism; David A. Redding's *The Faith of our Fathers* (Eerdmans, 1971), which expounds the faith of the Apostles' Creed; and Leonard Hodgson's *Christian Faith and Practice* (Eerdmans, 1965), a neo-orthodox treatment which is nevertheless centered on historic Christian faith and read by many evangelicals. C. S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*, available in several editions, might also be included here. One wonders, if these definitions and explications of evangelical faith and practice *are* adequate, how a contemporary evangelicalism that lives with them can yet remain so superficial and even corrupt, and maybe these books in the right hands will produce an answer to this question. Perhaps as definitions of historic Christian and evangelical faith these books are all we could want them to be, and the problem is somewhere else. But it may also be that this kind of literature, coexisting with a bad evangelicalism, suggests some limitation of its effectiveness that we need to consider.

On the other hand, the problem may not be in content so much as in the *application* of content to current realities. The literature may not be impotent, but it may not be able to do what further needs to be done by way of explicating the claims of God on a contemporary and existential situation. Maybe we should be preaching *like* John Stott, rather than (as is so often the case) simply handing his book to our students or laymen. Maybe these things need to be taught in the living room as well as the classroom of the Christian professor. Maybe we need to bring back Luther's table—an existential forum of real people in discussion of the great and small themes of our Christian togetherness—rather than just thrust content upon people impersonally. We need *something* to make this truth come alive in the way it ought to come alive as Christian truth. The problem seems not to be so much with content as with the ways in which we handle content. If we handle it *only* as a formal, academic

concern ("dry as doctrine" is an expression that says much), we should not expect anybody to get excited. But doctrine is our stewardship of a very vital thing—Christ's teaching, which should be able to literally *inflamm*e people!

#### GIVING EVANGELICAL WITNESS

Unfortunately, in some of the instances where our passion as evangelicals shows, our balance does not. Thomas Howard's *Christ the Tiger* (Lippincott, 1967) has become a classic example of wallowing in subjectivity at the expense of the categories of the faith, and Jack Rogers' more recent statement, *Confessions of a Conservative Evangelical* (Westminster, 1974), shows tendencies of the same thing. Yet both books are honest and worth reading. Current evangelicalism is full of "testimony" literature—some of it of real depth and value—that reproduces itself nicely but never really pushes on to significant reform. We have spiritual vitality in abundance, but often without knowledge and guidance.

As thinking and leading evangelicals we are somewhat at fault here, both for not having provided a more normative model for spirituality and evangelical concerns and for not actually being *out* there with the people. John Wesley *had* to travel widely to keep his societies in balance, but our multiform variety of grass-roots renewal is conspicuously devoid of any real care from the upper levels of evangelical sophistication. Before we beat all of these lower-class evangelicals to death for running amuck, we ought to consider our own responsibility for never caring enough to go after these sheep with a word of loving admonition and a practical alternative. To speak the truth, we who are the supposedly knowing often have had no practical alternative of normative vitality, and about the only thing we *have had* is criticism. But Bill Bright does not need criticism; he needs to be *shown* a better way if one is available. That we often have not done. It may be, of course, that the upper levels of evangelical sophistication are rotten to the core, and *that* may be the real problem. Luther seems to have felt, at least, that a people running amuck testified to bad leadership. John Wesley, where are you?

There have been polemic attempts to explicate conservative evangelicalism aimed at the secular or liberal religious constituencies in the States, and Harold O. J. Brown's *The Protest of a Troubled Protestant* (Arlington House, 1969) has some value as a model for this effort, and an occasional good admonition, too, for the evangelical faithful. This genre of evangelical writing is something we need more of, but somehow Brown's defense is too uncritical of the conservative evangelical establishment and fails to really fly as resounding evangelical statement throughout. For anyone who would like to do better, however, Brown's book is a worthwhile preparation for seeing both vital concerns and some mistakes to avoid.

When we make competing epistemological frameworks a badge of evangelical orthodoxy, as in Schaeffer, Van Til, Montgomery, Holmes, Mavrodes, or Bloesch, are we getting nearer to the crux of evangelical

explication or further away from it? Dallimore, the biographer of George Whitefield, notices that the eighteenth century had a booming orthodox apologetic industry but that it was not until Wesley and Whitefield arrived on the scene that apostolic fire fell. Is Dallimore saying anything to us? What is the relationship between formal apologetics and vital evangelical witness? In our day, there does not seem to be any connection at all! How should we feel about this, and what should we be doing about an apologetics industry that has become a Christian sub-culture enterprise instead of a flaming voice of truth to the world? Do we junk this and turn to the twentieth-century equivalent of preaching Christ in the fields, or is this apologetics industry of ours our field preaching?

### EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY REFORMED

Evangelical theological reformulation is a trendy thing just now, but there might be some debate about how significant such reformulation might be for evangelical renewal and reform. Is a new understanding of inspiration, for example, going to solve all of the problems of our evangelical communities? I do not think anyone would contend that it could. But reformulation is not unimportant, and reformulation of the right kind could well constitute itself the reformation we generally need—if it went on to become expressed in practical terms and grass-roots practice. Luther's understanding of grace started as a theological proposition but ended up, rightly, in the experience of the ordinary man. Our theological propositions, if the right ones and if handled rightly, might also move the world. The problems here, though, are great.

For example, is the kind of anti-literalist apologetic of Robert J. Blaikie in *Secular Christianity and God Who Acts* (Eerdmans, 1970) a sufficient basis for historic Christian faith and evangelical concerns, or does this compromise evangelicalism? Could it be that Blaikie's reductionism does not mean *anything* in evangelical terms, because what is the crux of evangelicalism is something else (such as regeneration) and not theological debates on Blaikie's difference from us as conservative evangelicals? What is the relationship, after all, between conservative evangelicalism and what is called "neo-evangelicalism"? Where is the avant-garde evangelicalism going, and should it be going there, and how can we know? These are all questions that bear on evangelical reform. If we do not know what is normative, we do not have anything to put up in the place of a superficial popular evangelicalism or a corrupt evangelical establishment. So what the theological scene is today among evangelicals *could* be rather important. Of course God could raise a Luther out of something wholly unfamiliar to us and surprise us all, just as he has done so many times before!

What does evangelical theological reform look like? Is it something like Ronald H. Nash's *The New Evangelicalism* (Zondervan, 1973), or Millard Erickson's *The New Evangelical Theology* (Revell, 1968)? And do we approach it generally or in the specific works of a particular

theologian—a Carl Henry or an Edward Carnell? Do books such as I. Howard Marshall's *Kept by the Power of God* (Bethany, 1969) or Foster and Marston's *God's Strategy in Human History* (Tyndale, 1974), which question the Reformed nature of conservative evangelical intellection generally, represent a healthy advance or, as some would certainly say, a frightening compromise? What is the significance of Lewis Smedes' *All Things Made New* (Eerdmans, 1970) for an evangelicalism that must ultimately reach the grass roots, and for our evangelism? Can the depths of our evangelical theological comprehension be used practically to change traditionalistic and nominal practice?

We also have to face the broader implications of a theology that is currently very much evangelical and alive and yet not bound by the tight walls that define conservative evangelicalism. Somehow we have to come to terms with the contribution of a Helmut Thielicke, whose major work, *The Evangelical Faith* (Eerdmans, 1974), is just appearing in its American edition. Can Thielicke help us, or do we move independently of a broader European evangelicalism which sometimes we hardly consider as evangelical at all? What do we have to say about or to do with Donald Bloesch's serious call for a broader and more catholic evangelicalism in his several books: *The Christian Life and Salvation*; *The Crisis of Piety*; *The Reform of the Church* (Eerdmans, 1967; 1968; 1970)? What is Richard Coleman doing in *Issues of Theological Warfare: Evangelicals and Liberals* (Eerdmans, 1972)? What do we think are the irenic limits and the ecumenical boundaries of a true evangelicalism?

Sometimes those Christian groups that most strongly deny tradition a place are most enclaved by it unawares and have no critical tools to deal with it. Has F. F. Bruce in *Tradition: Old and New* (Zondervan, 1970) shown us how we can use tradition in expanding our evangelical comprehensions and at the same time made us aware that, in spite of our protestations, we may be up to our necks in a secondary Christian tradition ourselves and bound by it?

There are large questions about what evangelical thinking is and how it explicates itself. Notwithstanding that many of us have heeded the appeal of Harry Blamires in *The Christian Mind* (S.P.C.K., 1966) and are seriously concerned for evangelical intellectual and theological reform, there is a good deal of confusion as to what a normative stating of Christian verities must be. Francis Schaeffer is now telling evangelicals that "the Bible without error in all that it affirms" is the watershed of evangelicalism's being really evangelical, and traditional conservative evangelical formulations on Scripture are being vigorously defended by scholars such as John W. Wenham in *Christ and The Bible* (Inter-Varsity, 1972) and the contributors to *God's Inerrant Word*, edited by John Warwick Montgomery (Bethany, 1974). Lest anyone think the traditionalists at this point cannot pack a normative evangelical wallop, J. I. Packer gives us a sensitive treatment of evangelical concerns in *Knowing God* (Inter-Varsity, 1973), as does Wenham in another recent book, *The Goodness of God* (Inter-Varsity, 1974). How can we remain open to this evangelical depth—and this tremendous loyalty to Scripture—and yet at the same time really listen to what we must listen to

and what the younger evangelicals are being influenced by—the reformulations of Biblical authority by equally dedicated evangelicals such as G. C. Berkouwer, Jack Rogers, or Dewey Beegle? Can the example of B. B. Warfield and James Orr, evangelicals who worked together notwithstanding their differences on Biblical inspiration, be a constructive model for us, or must we divide evangelicalism on this issue, as the Evangelical Theological Society has already been torn by it? What light from the evangelical heritage helps us here, or in any of these theological concerns? We want a normative evangelicalism, so that we can use this to correct a defective and often corrupt evangelical establishment. But how do we ourselves get a normative evangelicalism? What is it?

### THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH

When we come to the matter of practical evangelical renewal, again there is the problem of putting the grass-roots realities into line with responsible concerns for an evangelical Church order. Experiential reports and strategy of real vitality and Biblical depth have emerged from the conservative evangelical community in recent years and, to say the least, these have excited us. Larry Richards' *A New Face for the Church* (Zondervan, 1970), David Mains' *Full Circle* (Word, 1971), and Bob Girard's *Brethren, Hang Loose* (Zondervan, 1972) have put us on the edge of our evangelical pews in expectation of renewal. But somehow these good things, also, seem to coexist with an all-too-unreformed evangelical establishment. It is almost as if St. Francis had just come on the scene, and against the background of medieval Catholicism this looked very good indeed. But, on the other hand, this is no Luther and no Reformation.

And then there is the question of how this renewal, which seems so vital and is all around us, relates to evangelical norms in terms of the Church and of the institutions of a possibly corrupt evangelicalism. When the people caught up in renewal turn this emphasis into an independent ministry, is this good or bad for the evangelical establishment and for a normative ecclesiology? What is the Biblical, the historical Christian, and the present *form* that needs to guide (even if it is not to rigidly control) evangelicals? Has Gene A. Getz really probed to the depths of the thing in *Sharpening the Focus of the Church* (Moody, 1974)? Or do we need to go even deeper than this in our thinking—say, in the direction of Alfred F. Kuen's *I Will Build My Church* (Moody, 1971), which defends a believer's Church concept, or toward ecumenical awareness and catholicity with Robert S. Paul in *The Church in Search of Its Self* (Eerdmans, 1972) and Eugene Heideman in *Reformed Bishops and Catholic Elders* (Eerdmans, 1970)? Is there a cure for the sectarianism of all too much conservative evangelicalism, or does renewal inevitably mean an even further independence and fragmentation? There are large and practical concerns for reformers in this area also.



### OUR EVANGELICAL SCHOOLS

We all would like to see the evangelical academy as a real school of Christ and a training ground for twentieth-century Christian apostleship. And yet none of the current models seems to have the fire of a Geneva or a Württemberg under men who (to use a modern expression) put their pants on every morning just as we do. Where is our fire, and what is our problem? Now that we have evangelical scholars writing major articles for *Britannica* (Arthur Holmes on Christian Philosophy and F. F. Bruce on Biblical Interpretation), does that mean we have arrived? Is that the model we should push, or is there something else that goes with it—in a Calvin and a Luther—that we need yet to gain? What are the possibilities? If we are really doing our job, why does evangelicalism at large still look so bad? There are all kinds of questions crying to be answered in terms of our evangelical schools. What people like D. Bruce Lockerbie have said in *The Way They Should Go* (Oxford, 1972), Mayers, Richards, and Webber in *Reshaping Evangelical Higher Education* (Zondervan, 1972), and Arthur Holmes in *The Idea of a Christian College* (Eerdmans, 1975) seems still short of Württemberg and Geneva fire. How do we get the *spirit* (not the letter!) of Toronto's Institute for Christian Studies into our mainline academics?

What about refurbishing our upper levels of sophistication? The major thrust of our neo-evangelicals—Carl Henry's appeal for real evangelical efforts in graduate education—seems dead in its tracks for lack of support from the evangelical establishment, and such a defeat ought to tell us something about current realities. Württemberg, at least, *was* a university in terms of the culture of its day. Where is *our* university? Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy have dozens of them.

### OUR BEDSIDE MANNER

Fisher, Mehr, and Truckenbrod have raked the secular mental-health industry over the coals in *Power, Greed, and Stupidity in the Mental Health Racket* (Westminster, 1973). Somebody needs to do a book entitled *Provincialism, Egoism, and Ignorance in the Christian Counseling Racket*. Gary R. Collins provides the next best thing in his article "The Pulpit and the Couch" (*Christianity Today*, August 29, 1975), but critical perspective in evangelical pastoral care and counseling is in its infancy. The field is currently held by a host of cultic emphases and insights, often bearing little relationship to either current behavioral science or normative evangelical theology. One would like to see how the theological depths of Bernhard Citron's *New Birth* (Edinburgh, 1951), or Norman Pettit's *The Heart Prepared* (Yale, 1966), might be explicated in an evangelical model of conversion, for example. But, alas, all we have is Robert Ferm's *The Psychology of Christian Conversion* (Revell, 1959) and worse. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' *Spiritual Depression* (Eerdmans, 1965) is a step in the right direction in terms of using a Biblical viewpoint practically, but the only serious American contender for a system of Biblical pastoral care is Jay Adams, whose several works, including

*Competent to Counsel* (Baker, 1970) and *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Baker, 1973), indicate narrower foundations and a broader expansion of Adams' own insights than one can be comfortable with. It is perhaps indicative of the mess this field is in that the only real study of a pastoral care model that has been done by an evangelical has to look outside conservative evangelicalism and find a worthy subject in Paul Tournier of Switzerland. Reformers will want to read Gary Collins' *The Christian Psychology of Paul Tournier* (Baker, 1972) as a model of evangelical perception if not a definitive suggestion for what Biblical counseling has to be.

### EVANGELICALS ON THE LOOSE

How about our general reading? Are we taking a critical stance in this and *looking* for and at the problems, or is much relevant material getting past us uncomprehended? There is a broad field here, and no particular rules—except that we begin to function as critical evangelical minds. Reform-mindedness should sharpen our perceptions. The memoirs of Wilbur M. Smith, *Before I Forget* (Moody, 1971), contain a mine of phenomena characteristic of conservative evangelicalism, but we will have to perform the analysis. Are we up to the task? How is our knowledge and judgment? Can we discern that J. F. Findlay, Jr., *Dwight L. Moody* (Baker reprint, 1973), is a fair account, but that Bernard Weisberger's *They Gathered at the River* (Little, Brown, 1958) and William McLoughlin's *Modern Revivalism* (Ronald, 1958) caricature the evangelical tradition at points? These are standard sources now for our knowledge of the evangelical past. Can we handle them critically? If not, we deprive ourselves of our own heritage and overlook the helps for reform that a normative understanding of the evangelical tradition can provide. Can we judge our worthies in context, or do we tend to throw our Calvins out the window because we have had Servetus' red herring dragged across our path? In other words, do we have perspective and balance—necessary qualities if we are talking about a reform of institutions that must yet *function* after our reforms?

Who are Lyman Beecher, Philip Schaff, and Henry B. Smith, and how do they typify evangelicalism in the nineteenth century and represent viable options for us today? Evangelical reform is no neat-and-simple, cut-and-dried affair! Can we understand why *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Zondervan, 1974) might be a useful tool on the desk of any evangelical reformer, alongside his Bible dictionaries and commentaries? Can something deep and academic really lift us off our chairs, because we see its significance for reform, as easily as something lightweight and obvious, such as Colin Morris' *Include Me Out!* (Abingdon, 1968)? What do we know about our not knowing what we need to know that lights a fire under us?

### WE THE REFORMERS

As potential reformers—and here is a question I hesitate to

ask—how is our own spirituality? This is a central matter, and without it we will never get anything off the ground although we may raise a lot of wind trying. Perhaps our perceptions of the graces of our forebears have been somewhat one-sided and we have not seen the expression of *The Humanness of John Calvin* (Abingdon, 1971), which is presented so clearly by George Shriver, or the *Table Talk* (Fortress, 1967) of Martin Luther.

Pardon me for asking, but are we people who really pray—we who are out to reform the Church of Jesus Christ? Unfortunately, here I have no books to recommend. This is something that grows out of different soil—or, rather, it is something that grows out of everything that we are and must be. We must be *real* Christians before we can be *reforming* Christians. Might we have a problem *here*? Gertrude Behenna once put it in succinct terms: “How are you getting along with Jesus Christ?” And another question I hesitate to ask: “Do we know who the *real* enemy is?”

#### MISSIONS AND MISSIONARIES REFORMED

Rethinking and perhaps retreading the Christian missions enterprise is also an aspect of evangelical reform. Is the missionary style of such classic works as Arthur Brown's *The Foreign Missionary* (rev. ed.: Revell, 1950), Robert Speer's *Christianity and the Nations* (Revell, 1910), or Harold Lindsell's *Missionary Principles and Practice* (Revell, 1955) now part of a past era? Has Stephen Neill described in *Colonialism and Christian Missions* (McGraw-Hill, 1966) a past phase of Protestant overseas work, which in the spirit of Roland Allen's *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* or *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Eerdmans, 1962) we must now view as wrongheaded? Can we save a healthy respect for the efforts of our missionary heroes, whose best panegyric is perhaps Kenneth Latourette's massive *History of the Expansion of Christianity* (Zondervan reprint, 1970), while at the same time we weed the fields of their mistakes and continue to harvest? What is our missionary program for the future, and what is the content of that program to be? What does the need for evangelical reforms at home say about our overseas work? Are we exporting the right things today, and are we sure of this? These are all pressing questions.

We are faced with practical decisions and judgments as to whether evangelical missions move best under the impulse of the primary spirituality of something akin to the Full Gospel Business Men's International (which is a missionary agency, and a successful one, no matter what we may think of it) and spontaneous awakenings (the reports of which leave many unanswered questions for us), or under the impulse of definite program and strategy, defended by the “Church Growth” school and Donald McGavran's *Understanding Church Growth* (Eerdmans, 1970) and the contributors to *God, Man and Church Growth* (Eerdmans, 1973). We must ask ourselves whether the sophistication evident in Read, Monterroso, and Johnson's *Latin American Church Growth* (Eerdmans, 1969) turns us on as evangelicals or whether it perhaps indicates that our apostolic days are past and our missions

concerns are more in the hands of a burgeoning host of scholars and missions bureaucrats than in the hands of the living God. And what about ecumenical missions discussion? Do we have a valid place here amid what Norman A. Horner has called *Protestant Crosscurrents in Missions* (Abingdon, 1968) and Donald McGavran the *Eye of the Storm* (Word, 1972)?

Finally, has the social element in evangelical missions strategy risen to the surface because we understand this to be a necessary component of an integrated gospel, or because we have been perhaps influenced by non-evangelical models, or even forgotten the power of the naked Word? What do we think of Orlando Costa's *The Church and Its Mission* (Tyndale, 1974) in the light of this question? Do we have here a first-generation evangelical faith combined with social concern after the model of a John Wesley, or something less than a true evangelical awakening, needed as this social emphasis may be? These questions, and many more, need to concern us as we work toward evangelical reformation.

And now a footnote on our missionaries. Are we unable to see the evangelical missionary in the round, as in Tim Jeal's *Livingstone* (Putnam, 1973), J. C. Pollock's *Hudson Taylor and Maria* (McGraw-Hill, 1962), Courtney Anderson's *To the Golden Shore* (on Adoniram Judson; Zondervan reprint, 1972), or Elisabeth Elliot's *Who Shall Ascend* (on Kenneth Strachan; Harper, 1968)? Or are we still satisfied by the one-sided portraits of Edith Schaeffer's *L'Abri* (Tyndale, 1969) and most of the current "testimony" literature? Evangelical reform must see the real shape of things and encourage this realism if it is to do its appointed task. A faith that must always wear rose-colored glasses is not prepared for the real struggles of a fallen world and can be more cruel, at points, than even unbelief. How many Christians have been turned aside because a false ideal seemed too high? Making faith a practical reality is a work of evangelical reform and will take us out of the Christian-hall-of-fame mentality back into a comprehension with Luther that all true believers are saints and that our practice ought to be geared to this comprehension. Notwithstanding that this might cramp our style at points, it would work wonders for the restoration of a Christian spirituality in the broad constituency—which is exactly where Christian spirituality belongs. Evangelical reform destroys idols of every kind.

#### LAUSANNE AND BEYOND

What does Lausanne mean for American conservative evangelicalism, and how does this speak to the question of reform? I am put to shame, as an American evangelical, by both the spiritual vigor and the comprehensive intellection and strategy now evident in Third World evangelicalism and reflected in the Congress papers, *Let the Earth Hear His Voice* (World Wide Publications, 1975). What does this mean for us? What can we now learn from vital Christian movements abroad, recognizing that it would be just as wrong for us today to import programs of foreign evangelicalism as it was to force American, English,

or western European programs upon overseas areas in our missionary colonialism? What can Third World Christians offer us that is real for our needs? What problems of reform can they help us think through? Most of all, what relationship do we sustain with these now sophisticated brothers and sisters in burgeoning evangelical movements around the world? As an evangelical historian, am I related to the men (or women) who will write Church histories of Africa, of Asia, of Latin America? How will our evangelical world be different in the year 2000? What should we be doing to prepare for that? These too are questions of evangelical reform.

#### SOCIAL CONCERN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Finally, there are young evangelicals who are social activists. Need I cite the literature, or have we been so thoroughly hit in the face with it that, while admitting its validity, we are getting tired of reading it? But the social emphasis has hardly dented the evangelical establishment, and there is the question of how we can see our social and political responsibilities realized and at the same time integrated with truly evangelical renewal. We see on every hand the lack of integration—evangelicals on a social, political, or even women's evangelical bandwagon, pushing an emphasis to the exclusion of all else. "Charismatic social involvement" is a nice-sounding phrase that may soothe some consciences, but how much reality is behind it or behind the other phrases we have been throwing around—in explication not of what evangelicalism *is* doing but of what we think it *ought* to be doing? Turning "ought" into "is" is the work of evangelical reform. The evangelical establishment has killed some of its most promising reformers by flattering them to death after they had written their first book. Like China, the evangelical bulk can swallow anything, even if it has a few sharp corners. Reformers, we must not be swallowed!

#### AT THE BOTTOM

At the bottom of it all is the Bible, of course, buried under a mountain of conservative evangelical tradition and bad practice which will let scarcely a text shine in its true brilliance. As Karl Barth has said (*God in Action*, pp. 50 f.):

The task of theology consists in again and again *reminding* the people in the Church, both preachers and congregations, that the life and work of the Church are under the authority of the gospel and the law, that God should be heard. It has also to carefully examine how God is spoken of in this instance, what men mean by "God" in that instance, and what is presented as God's will and work. It has to be a watchman so as to carefully observe that constant threatening and invasive error to which the life of the Church is in danger, because it is composed of fallible, erring, sinful people. Theology must watch that particular theological falsity which alienates the Church from its true nature, and makes it into a "salt without a savor" if it should gain control of the Church. This theological falsity is

that relative truth which sets itself up as absolute in place of the truth of God in revelation. Against this falsity, theology has to summon itself to constant critical examination and retracing of steps. It must exhort preachers and Churches to a life of obedience (*italics ours*).

Read “conservative evangelical establishment” for “Church” and I will leave you, fellow reformers, with Barth’s admonition.