

The Church's Calling in a Troubled World: The grand design¹ and fragile engagement²

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ABSTRACT

The church's calling in the world is to embrace and live God's vision of the healing and restoration of all things. The church is to be, in word and deed, in the power of the Spirit, a sign, servant and sacrament of the Reign of God. For the church to live this calling it must embrace and embody a service sustained by head (orthodoxy), heart (orthopathy) and hand (orthopraxis). This calls the church to a fuller formation, a prophetic witness and a willingness to suffer the ignominy of following and serving Jesus, the iconic human, the redeemer and Lord of history.

INTRODUCTION

My title is meant to suggest that scripture gives us a mega-picture³ of God's purposes for our world, while reminding us that our engagement with the world in terms of witness and service is often only a meagre offering.⁴ Once we have laid the groundwork for a common understanding of the church's calling in the world, this paper highlights three important themes.

1. Understanding the dialectical nature of Christian existence and presence in the world.
2. The importance of the dynamic relationship between orthodoxy, orthopathy and orthopraxis.
3. The fruitful relationship between mysticism and prophecy.

A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH'S CALLING IN THE WORLD

I begin this section in hope. I believe that it is possible for the Evangelical church to come to a common understanding regarding the role of the church and that of Christians in society.

My hope is partly based on the belief that, the greater the challenges facing the church, the more cooperation is possible. It is also based on how impressed I have been by the more than a thousand student papers I have read over the past twenty-five years, describing some of the theological perspectives and practical ministry initiatives of many of the churches in Asia, Canada and Australia. There is little doubt that the Evangelical community seeks to be a blessing to the wider community. But my greatest hope lies with the ever-brooding Spirit who builds community and unity, making practical grass-roots ecumenism a possibility.

The Witness of Scripture

So let me begin by stating the obvious. Essential to Christianity is the understanding that, to the extent that

we have been impacted by the love, grace and healing presence of God, we are to live to the glory of God, serve the faith community and do good to others. And these three domains are deeply connected (Deut. 10:17-20; Gal. 6:10). The biblical injunctions to love God and love our neighbour are inter-related (Matt 22:34-40; 1 John 4:11; Luke 6:27-28), such that to serve the one is to serve the other (Matt 25:31-46). Our witness to others, therefore, consists in word and deed (James 1:22; Rom. 12:20). We bring the good news of the gospel (Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15), we do the deeds of love (1 Thess. 5:12; Gal. 6:10; 1 Pet. 3:9) and we engage in the work of justice (Psalm 106:3; Prov. 21:3; Amos 5:24; Matt. 12:18-21; Luke 11:22).

Ministry to others is to be lived out in the broader frame of Christian living. Christians are to form families (Eph. 3:14-15; 1 Tim. 5:4), be a gift to the faith community (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-31), be involved in daily work (1 Thess. 2:9, 4:9-12; 2 Thess. 3:10-12), be good citizens in the broader community (1 Pet. 2:12, 3:15-16) and submit to political authority (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17), but in all of this our obedience is to be to God (Deut. 27:10; Psalm 119:17; Jer. 11:4; John 15:10; Rom. 16:26). The key verse, of course, is, 'We must obey God rather than any human authority' (Acts 5:29).⁵ Within the framework of the broader biblical narrative, the following themes stand out with regard to the church's vocation and place in the world:

- Christians are a restless and uneasy insertion in the world. They are pilgrims,⁶ holding to a heavenly vision while deeply engaged in society and the issues of their time. Thus, they are a disruptive presence in the world, primarily committed not to world maintenance, but to world transformation.
- This disruptive presence is not a political revolutionary presence in the commonly understood sense of the word, but a restorative and healing presence that aims, through word, deed and the power of prayer, to undo all that is distorted and corrupted in our world, including the political sphere.
- The presence of Christians in the world is shaped by their participation in the healing grace of God in Christ, their ever-growing conformity to Christ, their embrace of Christ as model for their action in the world, their reliance on the Spirit, their life of prayer and the practical cooperation of churches working together for the sake of the Kingdom of God.
- The Christian task in society is to carry God's values into the world. This means that we are called and

invited to cooperate with all that God is seeking to do⁷ in the world in regard to its restoration and healing. This means that the church is not only a corrective presence in the world, but that it also casts a new vision of what humans and our society can become through the restorative grace of God.

- This means that we are called to be a second 'incarnation'⁸ in the world, an embodied and embedded presence in the shape and context of the world, subverting its march towards self-exaltation and seeking to bring it captive to the glory of God's reign.

The Voice of the Lausanne Movement

If we now turn to some of the documents of the Lausanne Movement, which seeks to speak for Global Evangelicalism, we find resonating themes. And these documents, along with scripture, can provide the basis for our common and cooperative action in society.

- The 1974 Lausanne Covenant makes clear that our 'Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism...and [to] responsible service in the world'.⁹ While holding that 'evangelism is primary',¹⁰ the Covenant calls us to 'share [God's] concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society'.¹¹
- The 1982 Grand Rapids Report on Evangelism and Social Responsibility sought to clarify the relationship between evangelism and social concern, noting that 'in practice...the two are inseparable'.¹² The report suggests a causal relationship between these two activities, describing social initiative as a 'consequence of evangelism' insofar as people touched by the grace of Christ want to serve others. Social concern thus 'accompanies it [evangelism] as its *partner*', and is 'a *bridge* to evangelism' in that care for and service to others can open the way for gospel proclamation.¹³
- The 1989 Manila Manifesto in its Twenty-One Affirmations highlights that 'we must demonstrate God's love visibly by caring for those who are deprived of justice, dignity, food and shelter'. It goes on to declare that Christian service 'demands the denunciation of all injustice and oppression, both personal and structural'.¹⁴
- And finally, the 2010 Cape Town Commitment sets out 'that we not only love mercy and [do] deeds of compassion, but also that we do justice through exposing and opposing all that oppresses and exploits the poor'. The document places this within a broader vision of the church's task in the world through the work of 'evangelism, bearing witness to the truth, discipling, peace-making, social engagement, ethical transformation, caring for creation, overcoming evil powers, casting out demonic spirits, healing the sick and suffering and enduring under persecution'.¹⁵

In these statements we can recognise the main missional motifs of the biblical story,¹⁶ which challenge us to find a common ground and purpose in working together to fulfil this calling. This requires moving beyond a gospel of benefits only to a gospel that calls us to responsibility, commitment and service. And it requires not only dialogue, but also humility and suffering.

THE RELEVANCE OF A CHRISTIAN DIALECTIC FOR CONTEMPORARY MISSIOLOGY

The core meaning of dialectic that I am working with concerns the 'metaphysical contradictions'¹⁷ that are part of human existence, the unresolved tensions in human affairs. Or, in the words of Jacques Ellul, it is the 'coexistence of contradictory elements' that are 'correlative in a temporal movement that leads to a new situation'.¹⁸

Such a dynamic, I suggest, is operative in the biblical narrative. God is fully complete in and of himself, yet creates a universe and elects a people.¹⁹ God is in the world, and at the same time is wholly transcendent. God is sovereign, yet works through his people. God engages the world with salvation and healing, and yet much of the world continues in its own rebellious ways. God has brought into being humanity, culture and politics, and at the same time has brought into being the church to be a witness to, and to challenge, society and politics.

The Bible, then, is full of creative tensions that can't be neatly resolved. And the less we take this into account, the narrower our missional response will become and the greater the possibility of discouragement in our engagement with the issues of our time.

Let me make two basic points to illustrate what I mean by this, before I go on to describe the nature and significance of this dialectic. If, for example, one's theology only emphasises the kingship of God and the call of the church in engaging such a ministry,²⁰ without simultaneously emphasising the prophetic nature of God's action in the world and the church's call to prophetic witness and ministry, one effectively positions the people of God as a solely conservative force in society, with no interest in its transformation.

To take another example, if one's reading of the biblical narrative focuses only on the movement of the Kingdom of God in history, without acknowledging the persistence of the worldliness of the world, its idolatry and its distortion of God's way, then one will easily become disheartened by conflict and suffering, coming to regard prayer as ineffective, and the Kingdom of God a false hope.²¹

Dialectic in the Biblical Story and Theology

The missiologist, David Bosch, also picks up this dialectic in the theology of Paul. Paul's writings persistently orientate us towards the fullness of God's work in the world in Christ and the full shalom of God's future, and at the same time prepare us for the challenges and suffering of witness and service in a refractory world. Bosch notes that 'Paul can simultaneously hold together two seemingly opposite realities: a fervent longing for the breaking in of the future reign of God; and a preoccupation with missionary outreach...in a hostile world'.²²

Bosch further notes that, in our present situation, the notions of 'contingency and unpredictability' need to be embraced. We need to engage the world in a 'chastened' manner, realising again 'the reality of evil – in humans and in the structures of society', while at the same time recognising that the church 'is missionary by its nature' and that the community of faith is therefore called to join 'God's turning to the world in respect of creation, care, redemption and consummation'.²³

Jürgen Moltmann offers a similar vision of the existential situation into which Christian faith compels us.

The core dialectical emphasis in Moltmann's theology is between the presence and future of God's kingdom. We do not follow a linear view of history, conceiving the world as a waiting-room for heaven. Instead, we abide in a dialectical view of history, living in the present as we anticipate God's future. Thus, the future not only awaits us, but has also come among us in the Kingdom of God. He writes, 'the decision which is forced upon the present must arise from our dream of the future'.²⁴ In other words, how we act into the world is not determined by the present cultural, economic and political landscape, but by what God's final Kingdom of healing, restoration and peace looks like (Rev. 21:1-4, 22:1-5). We are to be so heavenly minded as to constitute a corrective rather than corrosive insertion into the world. Always out of step with the dominant values of our world, we are the dancers of a new tomorrow. Moltmann concludes with: 'it is only in the foreign land that we understand what home is..., in the face of death... the uniqueness of life,... in strife... how to appreciate peace'.²⁵

Missional Implications of a Dialectical Understanding of Christian Presence in the World

A dialectical understanding of Christian presence in the world reminds us that we need to be people of two horizons.²⁶ We are in Christ and we are in the world. We are in both. We feel the impact of both in our lives. We therefore need to read both domains – Scripture and our world – well. We bring the gospel to the world in word and deed and we bring our world to God in prayer. Failing to do so means that we run the risk of engaging our world blindly, overconfident in the prospect of success. Or, at the other extreme, we can become pessimistic and give up seeking to bring about change. A dialectical understanding will help us to celebrate the power of the gospel and the power of love, while at the same time recognising that the good we seek to do may be rejected or resisted. The imperative is to remain faithful in our service in the face of mixed results.

A dialectical understanding reminds us that in our service to the world we are living the mystery of the relationship between God's work and ours. God is at work and we seek to work with God as a servant, sign and sacrament of the Kingdom of God. We need to be prayerful and reflective, ensuring that we don't do our own thing *for* God, but endeavour to discern the promptings of God's Spirit. But we have to live the mystery. Sometimes, we seem to do little and it is mightily blessed. At other times, we work hard for years and there is so little fruit. And, in the midst of all of this, we wonder why God does not work more powerfully.

We also need to acknowledge that God has established the human community with its various forms of government and related institutions. While all of these should acknowledge God's sovereignty, they seldom do. The task of the church is not to govern society, but to call all human institutions to the wisdom of the revelation of God in the practices of protection, care, justice and shalom. Thus the community of faith has a prophetic task,²⁷ and the most significant way for the church to raise its voice is to itself do (in whatever small way possible) what it is calling the government or other institutions to do.

And finally, we do well in attending to Karl Barth, much of whose theology was shaped in resisting Hitler's Nazi ideology with its radical dehumanisation of Jews

and other minority groups. He, too, notes the dialectical tension with which Christians have to live. We are bound to both God and the human community, and are set by the side of God over against the world.²⁸ He goes on to describe Christian disciples as those who upset things: society, customs, the state and particular forms of piety and religiosity.²⁹

Put in different terms, Barth says that because Christ became the incarnate Word so the church must be incarnate. It must be wholly in the world, yet wholly different from the world.³⁰ And, because of this, our loyalty to Christ must supersede all other loyalties, including to our own country. Barth writes: '[Christians] must always see themselves and act first and decisively as Christians' and 'only then as members of this or that nation'.³¹

THE DYNAMICS OF ORTHODOXY, ORTHOPATHY AND ORTHOPRAXY

While not explicitly using the terms orthodoxy and orthopraxy, it is clear that the Evangelical Lausanne documents operate with these two terms. The documents begin with a statement of core Christian doctrines and then move to application. Thus they move from right belief (orthodoxy) to right action (orthopraxy). In this, they follow the basic structure of the Pauline epistles, which move from theology to ethics.

This shift from doctrine to application and missional action is important. Our ministry in the world needs to be shaped by a biblical vision of God's concern for our world. Put simply, our mission is to be what God wants and is to be done in God's way. This sense not only directs but also sustains our ministry in the long haul. Thus our mission always calls us back to scripture, discernment and prayer.

Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy: A Liberation Theological Perspective

The Liberation theologians of the 21st century have been preoccupied with the relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. We do well to listen to them. Gustavo Gutierrez makes the important point that scripture speaks about a certain kind of orthodoxy. Biblical truth is never head knowledge only. It is truth embraced and lived. He refers to the call 'to do truth'.³² This, he notes, gives shape to the 'importance of action in [the] Christian life'.³³ A simple example of the connection between truth and action is that, if one believes that God is the Creator of all, then one will work for the care of the earth.³⁴ Analogously, if one believes all human beings are made in God's image, one will support all efforts to uphold human rights.³⁵

Gutierrez proposes that orthodoxy must constantly challenge, not only society, but also the church itself. The church is 'called and addressed by the Word of God',³⁶ which exhorts it to greater fidelity and service. For just as right belief shapes our action in the world, so too our action in the world helps us to understand the truth more fully. 'Theologians will be personally and vitally engaged... where nations, social classes, and peoples struggle to free themselves from domination and oppression.' And when this occurs the 'true interpretation of the meaning revealed by theology is revealed...in historical praxis'.³⁷ Put in simple terms, our praxis helps us to understand scripture, not simply our exegetical study and practices of prayer. In this ongoing process of conversion, the church becomes a

prophetic community³⁸ as it is transformed into what the Word calls it to be, living this out as a witness to society. In this sense, the church is a counter-community.

Jon Sobrino, in his discussion of the relation between theology and praxis (orthodoxy and orthopraxy), makes the point that 'praxis...[is] a means of grasping the nature of the Reign of God'. As such, 'without praxis an understanding of the Reign of God would be crippled and diminished'.³⁹ This is similar to the point that Gutierrez makes – namely, that in the doing of the Word, our understanding of the Word is deepened. For example, in the practice of Christian community, we understand better the triune nature of God as a community of 'persons'. In serving the poor we understand better the concern God has for the poor.

As Sobrino observes, from the struggle for justice emerges a growing understanding of 'the depth of injustice', and the reality of 'the anti-Reign appears with greater radicality'.⁴⁰ The practice of justice inspires hope and opposition alike. As such, praxis not only aids us in a hermeneutic reading of scripture, but also in a hermeneutic reading of our culture. In this, we can see that the present social status quo is disturbed by the nature of Christian witness and service.

Sobrino goes on to note that the full realisation of the Reign (Kingdom) of God is God's work and that 'human beings will never build the perfect utopia'.⁴¹ Nevertheless, marked by the grace of God, we are called to be an 'analogy with divinity', meaning that 'we may do for others what God has done for us'.⁴² The penetration of God's love and truth moves us into costly service. Orthopraxis is at once an 'ethical exigency' [urgent and pressing] and a 'hermeneutical principle for a knowledge of the Reign of God'.⁴³

Orthopathy: The Missing Link

The above discussion has focused on the inter-relationship between head (theological formation) and hand (missional out-working). But what of the matters of the heart?⁴⁴ The link so often missing between thinking and action is our affective response to the world around us.⁴⁵ The notion of 'orthopathy', stemming from the word *pathos*, has to do with one's passions, emotions and sympathies. The emotional dimension of the human being is intrinsic to who we are and how we function. It is possible to know about a need or an issue and not do anything about it, and it is often our emotions and sympathies that move us to action. In other words, we need to be moved in order to be engaged.

N. B. Woodbridge speaks of 'holy affections' in his discussion of the dynamics of orthopathy within a theological framework.⁴⁶ We are moved by what moves God. And this means that an interior shaping and re-shaping needs to take place within our being so that the 'heart of God' becomes our heart and the 'passion of Jesus' becomes our passion and thus our *modus operandi*.⁴⁷

P. O'Connell Killen and J. de Beer attempt to set this out more fully. They suggest that in the midst of life's *experience* certain *feelings* will arise. Instead of dismissing both our experience and emotions, they suggest we need to reflectively engage them. From this, certain *images* or ideas or concepts may arise. Thus, this leads to insight and these new insights can lead us into new and more informed *action*.⁴⁸ What the authors are doing

here is to suggest a link between reflection, feelings and action. They helpfully sketch out the dimensions of *feelings*, which they note 'are our embodied affective and intelligent responses to reality as we encounter it'.⁴⁹ They suggest that 'We travel from experience through feeling to image [and] to new ideas and awareness that can change and enrich our lives', resulting in 'small or large transformations of our being and actions'.⁵⁰

This reflective movement has another important dimension, namely, 'the artful discipline of putting our experience into conversation with the heritage of the Christian tradition'.⁵¹ In other words, we pay attention to our lived experience, feelings and actions in the world, but these in turn need to be brought to scripture and theology for affirmation, correction or other forms of creative engagement. Thus, while not using our three key terms, these authors are highlighting the importance of the interplay of orthodoxy, orthopathy and orthopraxy.

The Theme of Integration

There is much in the ecclesiastical domain that militates against holding these three themes together. The first is the fragmentation of theological discourse.⁵² Systematic, spiritual and pastoral theologies are often placed in separate silos. And, in our age of radical pragmatism, pastoral or practical theologies are now elevated to primary place in the pantheon. Secondly, Christianity has long been divided between those who hold world-denying, world-engaging and world-formative forms of the faith.⁵³ Thirdly, this division is compounded by the problem of dualistic thinking within the Christian tradition. We have elevated evangelism over the work of justice, prayer over daily work and orthodoxy over orthopraxy. Finally, we often prefer either/or rather than both/and or dialogical thinking.⁵⁴ To integrate thinking and action will always be a challenge.⁵⁵

Despite these challenges, integration is called for. Orthopathy can be the fuel that moves us from orthodoxy to orthopraxy. Orthodoxy gives theological justification and shape to our orthopraxy. And orthopraxy gives authenticity and embodiment to our orthodoxy.

One practical way to think about this is the following:⁵⁶

- Head and Hand (without Heart) can lead to bureaucratic, formal, functional and pragmatic ways of operating.
- Heart and Hand (without Head) can lead to unthinking and impulsive ways of functioning.
- Head and Heart (without Hand) can lead to being knowledgeable and having good intentions, but not

The three together in an integrated way means that one is thoughtful and informed, passionate and empathetic, and willing to get one's hands 'dirty' in the long march for restoration, justice and shalom.

William Wilberforce: A Practical Example

William Wilberforce is well known for his parliamentary struggle to end the British slave trade. He did so as a Christian. He saw what 'much of the rest of the world could not, including the grotesque injustice of one man treating another as property'.⁵⁸ He saw that this had to change 'because all men and women are created...in his [God's] image, and are therefore sacred', and this is 'at the heart of the Christian Gospel'.⁵⁹

Wilberforce understood how deeply the slave trade was part of the British economy, and how much its abolition could negatively impact the economy. But he believed '[t]here is a principle above everything that is political', and this had to do with 'conscience, the principles of justice, the laws of religion, and of God'.⁶⁰

Being young and optimistic, and in the glow of a newfound faith in Christ, he believed that change was readily possible. Little was he to know that it would deeply test his faith, destroy his health and take twenty years of his life. There is little doubt that Wilberforce lived the long journey of orthopraxy.⁶¹ And this task was not one of direct evangelisation, but humanisation in light of the gospel, a task Wilberforce, as an Evangelical, believed was directly inspired by the gospel.

That Wilberforce was also concerned about orthodoxy and orthopathy is evident from his writings. He criticised the compromised Christianity of 18th century England by pointing to the fact that the 'distinctive features' and 'unique doctrines of Christianity have almost disappeared'⁶² – the incarnation, the crucifixion, the redemptive work of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, among others.⁶³ Wilberforce also stressed the importance of orthopathy. He was particularly concerned about the 'nominal' Christianity of his day,⁶⁴ which he believed led to selfish living and a lack of concern for others.⁶⁵

Wilberforce called for a lived theology and spoke of the importance of emotions in living the Christian life: 'it is the religion of the affections which God particularly requires'. As our 'most active principle', emotions move us from nominal faith to transformative action.⁶⁶ Paul's passionate nature remained 'unabated' after his conversion, placed 'in the service of his blessed Master'.⁶⁷ For Wilberforce, Christian orthopathy involves emotions such as love, zeal, hope, kindness and pity.⁶⁸

A Reflection

Clearly we need to be people of head, heart and hand. Without heart, the mind remains aloof and the hand idle. To be people of feeling means that we need to be touched and awakened, and this can occur in many ways. The gospel may awaken us, as may seeing a need, the prompting of the Spirit, a challenge from a friend, recognising our own need or identifying with those who are going through similar things to what we have experienced. The possibilities are endless. The love of Christ can move us not only to sympathy but also to an engaged empathy. The more we make ourselves affectively and practically available to others, the more we discover of Christ's love for us.

THE FRUITFUL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MYSTICISM AND PROPHECY

At first blush, we may assume that mysticism and prophecy are related neither to each other nor to social transformation. But this is largely due to the fact that we have too narrowly defined mysticism as ecstatic experience which draws people away from the world, and prophecy as simply predicting the future under a spiritual influence. But the relationship looks different when we reconceive mysticism as an experiential sense of God's presence⁶⁹ and prophecy in terms of correcting the present in the light of God's future.

Christian life, lived in faith, hope and love, has its origins in an existential encounter with Christ through Word and Spirit, lived in the light of scripture as it speaks to us and in a growing relationship with and conformity to Christ, the Living Word, as people empowered and led by the Holy Spirit. We are, moreover, in the words of Evelyn Underhill, to find our small place in vast operations of God's purposes for our world.⁷⁰ This has much more to do with mysticism than mere rationality.

St. Francis,⁷¹ St. Ignatius of Loyola,⁷² John and Charles Wesley,⁷³ Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf of the Modern Moravians,⁷⁴ John Woolman of the Quakers⁷⁵ and Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker⁷⁶ can all be cited as activists whose service to the world sprang from a profound Christian mysticism.

While it is true that, in the history of the church, the contemplative (or the mystical) dimension of life was held to be higher than action,⁷⁷ at its best the church placed an equal emphasis on contemplation and the demands of love for the neighbour.⁷⁸

Janet Ruffing, in discussing the relationship between mysticism (or contemplation) and prophecy (or action), describes Metz's notion of contemplative protest in terms of the development of a 'mystical-political'⁷⁹ dimension in Christianity. She cites Johann Baptist Metz, who writes that 'the experience of God [should] not [be located] in peaceful tranquillity but in protest to God about evil in the world, a questioning of God and a "suffering unto God"'.⁸⁰

Ruffing refers to Martin Buber's notion that prophecy is not oriented toward rapture – that is, a static vision of or fatalistic disposition toward the future – but to 'vocation and mission'.⁸¹ She also draws on Walter Brueggemann who, in *The Prophetic Imagination*, emphasises that 'prophets suffer in their own hearts the discrepancy between what is and what ought to be', and whose task is 'to reenergise its listeners and help the community remember its own history and promises and possibilities in a way that will inspire conversion and fresh resolve'.⁸²

Our reflection on the relationship between mysticism and prophecy, or contemplation and action, revolves around a number of very simple concepts:

- To engage the world prophetically one needs a different vision to the dominant values of the culture and society. For the Christian, this vision is embedded in the biblical narratives and in the Living Word, Jesus Christ.
- To engage society prophetically one needs to disengage from society some of the time as a spiritual discipline in order to draw close to the heart of God and to re-engage the world with new eyes and a strengthened resolve.
- To engage society prophetically one must be willing to wrestle with God.
- To engage society prophetically one must be willing to suffer the consequences of one's speaking and acting.
- To engage the world prophetically one must come with the garland of peace in the cause of justice.

There is a very basic dialectic at work in what I have been saying here. It's the hermeneutical circle in: the dynamic relationship between contemplation and action.⁸³ In the movement of transcendence we move towards God in worship, prayer and listening. Here we are loved, are encour-

aged and gain new inspiration for our pilgrimage. But, in this movement, God (who so loves the world) will always bring our attention back to serving the neighbour and to the work of justice. And, in our witness and service in the world, we seek to discern and to see the hand of God at work and the Spirit preparing the way. We seek the God who is on pilgrimage with us. And in our work, where so quickly we feel overwhelmed, there is the invitation to draw aside, to be still, to pray, to wait and to continue the journey again.

Dorothee Soelle puts this simply: 'these two movements, kneeling down and standing up, belong together and succeed only in tandem'.⁸⁴ This is beautifully and painfully relevant for the challenges facing the church. In the long journey for justice, we need a spirituality of the heart. Rationality will not move us to compassion, while the living gospel will. Activism will not beget activism, but revelation and inspiration will. In the long journey for justice, we need a spirituality of the heart. The doctrine of the 'perseverance of the saints' needs to be embraced, not only regarding our salvation, but also in relation to our service in the world. Our self-preoccupation and our lack of identification with those who are presently suffering can only be overcome by a vision of the Christ of the gospels who calls me to be like him in his healing ministry.

The Challenge of Advocacy

I have worked for twenty years with people struggling with drug addiction, delinquent youth and men and women in prostitution.⁸⁵ I believe that theology, prayer and activism belong together. In my experience, the church, community-based organisations and even big businesses are willing to support a ministry of drug counselling, rehabilitation, drug prevention education, prison work and vocational training so that those scarred by drugs can regain a normal and more productive life. And secular businesses that supported outreach programs I was involved in did not mind that people became Christians. Nevertheless, through this journey, I learned a painful lesson. Over time it became apparent that the police drug squad in our city of Brisbane were falsely arresting street people and under-reporting drug seizures. Thus members of the drug squad had become corrupt and had themselves become the drug pushers.

We felt that we had to do something. The first move was to get the assistance of lawyers who helped falsely accused street people get off or get lesser sentences. Our second move was to see the government minister responsible for police and inform him of what we knew. He said he would look into the matter and did nothing. So some time later we went to see the Premier of our State, who was a professed Christian. He also said he would look into it, but nothing happened. And so the months went by and the false arrests and the sale of illegal drugs by the police went on unabated. So we made one more move (and, yes, all that time we were praying a lot): we went to the media to expose what was happening.

All hell broke loose. The police denied everything. The Premier publically condemned us as communists. And the churches withdrew their financial support. We were all but destroyed. We were on our knees. Advocacy comes at a price.

But a seed was sown. And others sowed seeds. Eventually, several years later, a Commission of Inquiry into police corruption was established, headed by Tony

Fitzgerald, QC. In the light of the Commission findings, numerous police, four ministers of the government and the Police Commissioner were found guilty and imprisoned; the Premier was charged for perjury but was acquitted due to a hung jury.⁸⁶

What is my point in telling this event? It is to practically illustrate what the Evangelical Lausanne documents call us to do. The Manila Manifesto (1989) states that 'we must demonstrate God's love visibly by caring for those who are deprived of justice'; our Christian service 'demands the denunciation of all injustice and oppression'.⁸⁷ This means that we cannot simply accept what a government is doing based on a naive reading of Romans 13, which is erroneously held to teach that we must obey a government no matter its policies.⁸⁸ Karl Barth, Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer certainly did not believe that Hitler had to be obeyed.⁸⁹ They rightly resisted him.⁹⁰ And we should do the same in relation to government policies that are oppressive and unjust. We are to speak for the voiceless. We are to identify with the suffering. We are to speak truth to power. And we act on behalf of the victims, by showing another way – the way of healing and restoration. Thus healing balm is in our hands; never a gun. And all that we do on behalf of the oppressed is so that the oppressor may also find the grace of God.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have explored what it means for the Church to be an agent of community transformation. I have used three different, but hopefully complementary, lenses to engage this most relevant topic: the dialectical presence of Christians in the world; the inter-related themes of orthodoxy, orthopathy and orthopraxy; and the dynamics between mysticism and prophecy. At the same time, I have argued for an Evangelical consensus for our action in the world, and for a practical ecumenism which moves the churches from competition to cooperation.

The underlying thrust of this paper is that Christians are called to be a counter-movement in society, reflecting the Reign of God in the light of the gospel and the sustenance and guidance of the Spirit. We are, therefore, to call into question all that reflects the anti-Reign of oppression, lack of justice and death, whether that occurs in the government, social institutions or even the church itself. This prophetic disposition calls for radical identification with those who suffer and for us to share in their suffering. To do so, we need to be sustained by the gospel, by communities of resistance and by the spiritual disciplines.

*As the tamed horse
Still hears the call of her wild brothers,
And as the farmed goose flaps hopeful wings
As her sisters fly overhead,
So too, perhaps
The wild ones amongst us
Are our only hope in calling us back
To our true nature.
Wild ones
Who have not been turned to stone
By the far-reaching grasp of the empire
And its programme of consumer sedation
The killing of imagination.
Where, my friends,
Have the wild ones gone?*⁹¹

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Endnotes

- I am referring to the meta-narrative of Scripture, which speaks of God's creative and redemptive activity summarised in the paradigm of Creation-Fall-New Creation. For a very accessible discussion of this paradigm from a Reformed perspective, see C. Plantinga, *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning and Living* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 17-100.
- I am referring to the nature of the church's engagement with society. It acts into the world with persuasion and acts of care and kindness, proclaiming and expressing God's redemptive love in Christ.
- Post-modern culture is not into such constructions, but into a fluid relativism. But J. A. Kirk is right, 'Christian faith is necessarily based on a 'grand narrative' whose message counters the possibility of manipulation in the interests of sectarian concerns' in J. A. Kirk, *What is Mission? Theological Explorations* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999), 10.
- The Lausanne document, the 'Manila Manifesto', acknowledges 'that many of our congregations are inward-looking, organised for maintenance rather than mission' and that 'we have been indifferent to the plight of the poor' in John Stott, ed., *Making Christ Known*, 242, 235.
- For important texts on the relationship between church and state, see C. Villa-Vicencio, *Between Christ and Caesar: Classic Contemporary Texts on Church and State* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).
- See 'Lumen Gentium' for a discussion of the church's nature as the pilgrim people of God, in A. Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents* (Northport, NY: Costello, 1996), 72-78.
- Mission is 'missio Dei', and as such it is rooted in who God is, and is 'God's very own work'. The church is called to participate in all of God's redemptive work in the world, in Karl Muller, *Mission Theology: An Introduction* (Nettetal, Germany: Steyler Verlag, 1987), 46.
- We are called to be in Christ and Christ is to be formed in us, thus core to our 'Christian vocation...[is] "putting on Christ in one's own life"'. But this does not mean that we become carbon copies of the historical Jesus. Instead, we are to 'embody something of the Word [Jesus Christ, the Living Word] in ourselves in a distinctive and personal way', in I. Delio, *Franciscan Prayer* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger, 2004), 149, 155. In this secondary sense we are to be second incarnations of Christ.
- John Stott, ed., *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 20.
- Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 28.
- Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 24.
- Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 183.
- Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 181-82.
- Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 231.
- The Lausanne Movement, *Cape Town Commitment*, 2010, www.lausanne.org/content/ctcc/ctcommitment, 12, 9.
- While there may be Evangelicals who think that their position is unique, this is clearly not the case. Pope John Paul II points to the importance of evangelism: 'in the complex reality of mission, initial proclamation has a central and irreplaceable role', 75, in *Redemptoris Missio: Encyclical Letter of the Supreme Pontiff, John Paul II on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate* (Pasay City, Philippines: Daughters of St Paul, 1992).
- The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*, ed. G.W. Turner (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1987), 284.
- Jacques Ellul, *What I Believe*, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 32.
- Lesslie Newbigin points out that election is for service to others: 'Those who are chosen to be a blessing are chosen for the sake of all ... "election is for responsibility, not for privilege", in Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 32 (author's italics).
- Theology has identified the three-fold ministry of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King. As King we recognise Christ's lordship over all of life. As Priest we acknowledge his healing ministry and his prayer ministry in bringing humans to God. As Prophet we celebrate his work in bringing the purposes of God to humanity and the call to change our ways. See L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 357.
- This, of course, is related to the theodicy question. One response to this most troubling question which affects all of us is that God's sovereignty must be viewed from the perspective of the eschaton, God's final future (1 Cor. 15: 24-26).
- David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: paradigm shifts in theology of mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 153.
- Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 356, 361, 365, 391.
- Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans. James W. Leitch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 233.
- Jurgen Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 171.
- See Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).
- Karl Barth is of the opinion that the most basic vocation of the Christian is to be 'the reflection and echo of the prophetic Word of Jesus Christ', and that Christ sets us 'in the service of his own prophetic office and work', in *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, Vol. IV, 3, II (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1962), 622, 650.
- Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 609.
- Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 623.
- Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 728.
- Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 741.
- Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, trans. Sister Caradad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 8.
- Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 8.
- For a theology of earth care, see S. Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian View of Creation Care* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).
- For a theology of human rights, see N. Wolterstorff, *Justice and Wrongs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).
- Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 9.
- Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 10.
- Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 10.
- Jon Sobrino, 'Central Position of the Reign of God in Liberation Theology' in I. Ellacuria and J. Sobrino, eds. *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 377.
- Sobrino, *A Theology of Liberation*, 377.
- Sobrino, *A Theology of Liberation*, 378.
- Sobrino, *A Theology of Liberation*, 379.
- Sobrino, *A Theology of Liberation*, 379.
- In the OT and NT, the heart is seen as the centre of one's inner life. O.R. Brandon notes that 'heart is the source, or spring of motives; the seat of passions; the center of thought processes; the spring of conscience'. See 'Heart' in W.E. ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984) 499.
- The Evangelical missional documents of the Lausanne Movement don't give enough attention to orthopathy and spirituality. An exception to this is the Cape Town Commitment (2010), with its foundational discussion of the way in which we have been impacted by the love of God, and therefore love what God loves and act into the world in and through the love of God.
- The person who has written extensively about holy affections is Jonathan Edwards. See his *Select Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. III, The Religious Affections* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961).
- N. B. Woodbridge, 'Living Theologically: Towards a Theology of Christian Practice in Terms of the Theological Triad of Orthodoxy, Orthopraxy and Orthopathy as Portrayed in Isaiah 6:18: A Narrative Approach', at www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/807/1063.
- P. O'Connell Killen and J. de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 21.
- Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 27.
- Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 45, 42.
- Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 2.
- See Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001, Reprint).
- See H. R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956); and R. E. Webber, *The Church in the World* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1986).
- See H-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd Edition, trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall (London: Sheed and Ward, 1993).
- See C. Ringma, 'Holistic Ministry and Mission: A Call for Reconceptualisation', *Missiology: An International Review* XXXII, No. 4 (2004): 431-448.
- Head = orthodoxy; Heart = orthopathy; and Hand = orthopraxy.
- See A. Kelly and S. Sewell, *With Head, Heart and Hand: Dimensions of Community Building* (Brisbane: Booralong, 1988), 23.
- Eric Metaxas, *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery* (Oxford: Monarch, 2007), xiv.
- Metaxas, *Amazing Grace*, xvi.
- Quoted in Metaxas, *Amazing Grace*, 136.
- For a very detailed account see A. Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery* (London: Pan, 2005).
- William Wilberforce, *Real Christianity: Contrasted with the Prevailing Religious System*, ed. J. M. Houston (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1982), 105.
- Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, 119-121.
- Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, 100.
- Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, 108-109.
- Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, 28-29.
- Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, 29, 31.
- Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, 29, 31, 33.
- Bernard McGinn has made it clear that mysticism has to do with 'a direct and transformative presence of God' which changes 'their [Christians'] minds and their lives', and this change has missional implications, in Bernard McGinn, ed., *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism* (New York: The Modern Library, 2006), xiv, xvii, 520.
- Evelyn Underhill writes, we are called into 'a total concentration on the total interests of God', while at the same time that we have 'to take our small place in the vast operations of His Spirit', in Evelyn Underhill, *The Spiritual Life* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1937), 87, 89.
- See I. Delio, *Franciscan Prayer*.
- See W. A. Barry and R. G. Doherty, *Contemplatives in Action: The Jesuit Way* (New York: Paulist, 2002).
- See Paul Wesley Chilcote, *Recapturing the Wesley's Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).
- See A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Reformer: A Study in the Moravian Contribution to Christian Mission and Unity* (London: SCM Press, 1962).
- See 'Practical Mysticism: Quakers and Social Transformation', in J. Ruffing, ed., *Mysticism and Social Transformation* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press), 129-142.
- See R. Ellsberg, ed., *Dorothy Day: Selected Writings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992).
- See McGinn, *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism*, 520.
- See Dom Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism: Augustine, Gregory and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003). Butler quotes Augustine's reference to the two dimensions of the Christian life: 'the one is in the work of action, the other in the reward of contemplation', 159.
- Johann Baptist Metz, *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension in Christianity*, trans. J. Matthew Asley (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1998).
- Ruffing, *Mysticism*, 7-8.
- Ruffing, *Mysticism*, 8.
- Ruffing, *Mysticism*, 10.
- Segundo Galilea speaks of a contemplation of transcendence where we seek the face of God and a contemplation of immanence where we see the hidden face of Christ in the neighbour. See his *The Way of Living Faith: A Spirituality of Liberation* (Quezon City: Claretian, 1991) and his *Following Jesus* (Quezon City: Claretian, 1994).
- Dorothee Soelle, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*, trans. B. and M. Rumscheidt (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 285.
- For something of this story see J. Grant-Thomson, *Jodie's Story* (Sydney: Anzea, 1991).
- For the full report see www.ccc.qld.gov.au/about-the-ccc-the-fitzgerald-inquiry.
- John Stott, ed., *Making Christ Known*, 231.
- The fundamental thrust of Pauline ethics is that they are reciprocal. When women, children and slaves were addressed to behave in certain ways; so were husbands, father and masters. Similarly, with the government, Paul says its role is to reward good conduct and to punish bad. Basically what this means is that the Christian lives the values of the Kingdom of God – reconciliation, healing, peace-making and justice. In so doing, the Christian lives differently to the government, and if the government is offended by this the Christian 'submits' to the punishment of the government.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer makes a distinction between God's appointment of governance and government as an 'order of creation' and a particular government at a particular point in history. Christians are to always support the concept of government, but they may need to resist particular policies of a government, in J. W. de Gruchy, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 199.
- See C. Ringma, *Resist the Power with Jacques Ellul* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2000).
- Celtic Daily Prayer, Book Two: Farther Up and Farther In* (London: William Collins, 2015), 904.