

"Evangelists" and "Liberationists"

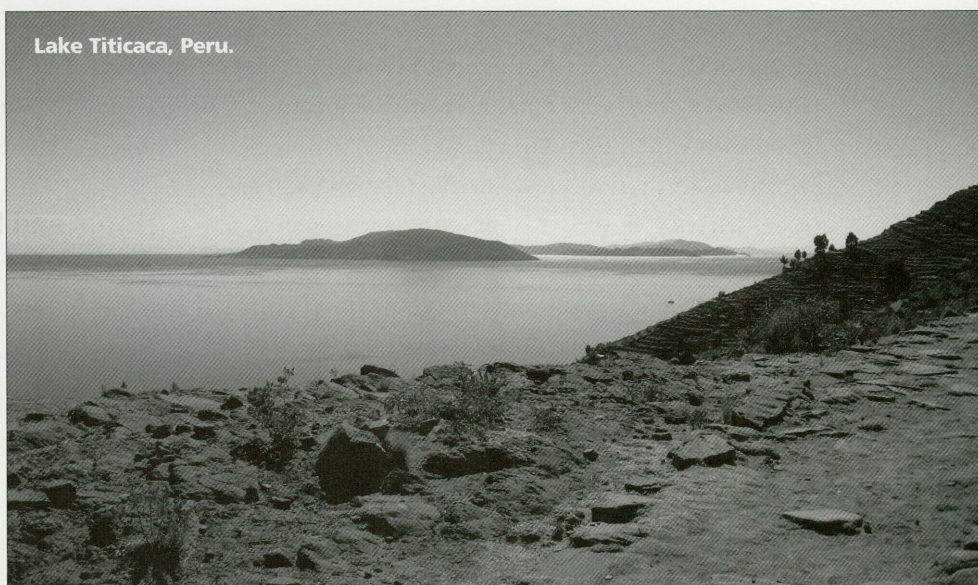
Logging Passages South of the Rio Grande | BY CHARLES TEEL

An individual gospel without a social gospel is a soul without a body. A social gospel without an individual gospel is a body without a soul. One is a ghost. The other is a corpse.

—E. Stanley Jones, *The Unshakable Kingdom*

In the face of severe injustice, suffering, and oppression, the Stahls identified with the poorest of the poor and incarnated the gospel in ways that profoundly impacted the spiritual, social, economic, and political life of the Peruvian highlands. The experience of our friends Fernando and Ana calls us to live with the tension of enacting the "now" of God's kingdom while recognizing that the "not yet" fullness of that kingdom eludes human history.

—Gustavo Gutiérrez, Stahl Center Conference, 1997



These two quotations, from an evangelical missionary patriarch and the father of liberation theology, offer hints that leading spokespersons in such camps as "evangelist" and "liberationist" may too readily be categorized as rooted in radically opposing camps: evangelists being concerned mainly with saving individual souls and liberationists tilting chiefly at the windmills of societal structures.

However, the stuff of history guards against rigid classification and the freezing of categories, as may well be gathered from Gutiérrez's response to the standing ovation accorded him by members of the American Academy of Religion on the thirtieth anniversary of his influential book, *A Theology of Liberation*.¹ "Theologies are born to die," he stated. Then, with a twinkle in his eye, he concluded, "as are theologians!"

The purpose of this essay is to report on thirty-some field course offerings that students from La Sierra University, Loma Linda University, and Andrews University—along with community members—have participated

in over the past three decades as they have wrestled with contrasting ways that Christians south of the Rio Grande relate to issues of religion and societal change.

The terms *evangelist* and *liberationist* build upon what social historian Ernst Troeltsch introduced as "ideal types": polar opposite characteristics at continuum extremes that do not exist in reality yet serve as heuristic devices to aid in analysis.² In this report, evangelist and liberationist types are associated with images held by individuals and communities in the Christian tradition that continue to be challenged by tension between what might be contrasted as the evangelists' "rightly dividing the word of truth" (*orthodoxis*) and the liberationists' "rightly enacting the word of truth" (*orthopraxis*).

Participants in these tours have experienced natural and human wonders south of the Rio Grande. In addition, they have probed positions advanced by the religious left and right in Mexico, Central America, and

South America, as glimpsed in the following partial list of sources drawn upon and contexts experienced

- Worshiping in the newly refurbished cathedral in Cuernavaca, Mexico, and conversing with the archbishop who welcomed our group in his homily
- Dialoging with a Catholic nun/physician, who practices not far from Guatemala's Lake Atitlán and who effectively headed a national health care program in her country
- Quizzing mothers who gather monthly to report on their *micro empresas* (small businesses enterprises) in the Peruvian Andes while taking an indigenous meal prepared in clay pots over open fires at a working ranch on the shores of Lake Titicaca
- Attending services with an Adventist congregation on Lake Titicaca's "floating islands" and hearing children sing in Quechua, Aymara, English, and Japanese
- Shadowing Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) workers engaged in agricultural programs on the Peruvian Amazon
- Interviewing such individuals as cabinet officials, congress persons, priests, pastors, and dwellers in peasant villages who commented on the life and work of Adventist missionaries Fernando and Ana Stahl—the pioneering Adventist couple lauded above by liberationist Gustavo Gutiérrez and reported in Andes studies journals and *Spectrum*.³

During the 1970s, our groups worshiped regularly in a renovated eighteenth-century cathedral in Cuernavaca, Mexico, where simplicity abounded. Much of the gold and glitter accumulated over the centuries had been sold and invested in initiatives that empower the dispossessed in the Cuernavaca Diocese. Likewise, paint had been removed to reveal long-hidden murals and plaster taken off to expose the texture of hewn stonework. Not a trace remained of the familiar hierarchy of saints.

A contemporary Christ presided over the altar, with the Virgin occupying a less-than-conspicuous position on a side wall. Simple cotton robes enlivened by serapes and colorfully embroidered miters replaced ostentatious vestments. The liturgy used vernacular Spanish in place of the traditional Latin, and the music provided by flute and pan-

Outdoor clinic: Stahl listens to the heart of a villager.



pipe fairly celebrated the congregations' indigenous roots.

Sophisticated urbanites and peasants from the countryside heard their pastor, the Catholic bishop of Cuernavaca, invite them to participate in a spiritual renovation in their lives akin to the physical renovation they made in their house of worship. For visiting students and community members from *el Norte*, it was a spiritual moving experience—even for those who could not claim fluency in the Spanish language.

The Bishop's call to personal and social commitment concluded a homily that offered both pastoral comfort and prophetic challenge. "As individual persons," he suggested,

we gather weekly to celebrate that we have experienced salvation—that we are saved, forgiven, and accepted by God. God first loved and forgave. And now, gathered at the table for holy communion, we are now called to love and forgive—not in order that God will love and forgive but because God has loved and forgiven.

In turn, the bishop built on the theme that, just as God loves and forgives individual persons and offers us healing and wholeness, God also calls us to make such qualities manifest in structures and institutions of shared community life.

God's people are thus called to confront and confess personal and individual sin; no less are we also called to confront and confess social and institutional sin. Just as the Gospels and the prophets appeal to love and justice in very specific terms, so our interactions with the Word must result in specific application and action in the world—else the Word, not to mention God himself, becomes an idol.

How might we keep the word from becoming an idol? By prophetically speaking God's word to this time and place. On the local scene, this means that we can hardly ignore the sugarcane cutters and others who stand at the mercy of forces, institutions, and power politics that discriminate against them. We must continue to alleviate conditions by building better barracks for housing, of course, but we must also rectify the unjust institutional structures that produce these conditions.

On the international scene, we must heed the call of brothers and sisters across the border in Guatemala, and stand with them in their travail as they face warring factions. The martyrdom of Bishop Oscar Romero in neighboring El Salvador is now being shared daily by Christian leaders and lay workers in Central America—their only "crime" being their actions on behalf of the poor. As heirs to a prophetic tradition, we must be reminded that prophecy includes not only "foretelling" but also "forthtelling" in the tradition of Hebrew prophets who denounced unjust social structures that had strayed from God's call.

The bishop's liturgy and homily offer an example of the equality and fraternity that he hoped to see incorporated in social structures, an order of service that contrasted markedly with most "first world" Catholic worship services of the time. Officiates sat on simple pine chairs in front of the altar and discoursed with the people. Teenagers from the countryside attired in peasant dress contributed folk music to the liturgy.

Defying Latin machismo, women led in numbers equal to men throughout the service. Occasionally, the bishop lapsed into the exclusive *hermanos*, but he generally introduced his admonitions with the inclusive *hermanos y hermanas*. The service concluded with the spontaneous kiss of peace that leveled caste and class in a most intimate and personal manner.

Following the service, the bishop sat with our group and queried, "So most of you Norte Americanos are Protestants? Are you aware that the root of being a *Protestante* is to protest—to protest against that which is unjust and to protest in favor of that which is just." The bishop paused, smiled benevolently, and raised a forefinger for emphasis: "I trust that you are all being good *Protestantes*!"

In Mexico City, we experienced worship with an urban evangelical congregation that assembled amidst chrome, glass, walnut paneling, and linoleum-quarried stonework having given way to wood structures by the time Protestants arrived on the scene. Members carried Bibles, hymnals, and adult education quarterlies.

Upwardly mobile and aspiring families appeared predominant. Men were uniformly suited, women conservatively attired, and children freshly scrubbed, with faces and shoes shining. The five-hundred-seat sanctuary teemed with devout members of a voluntary association that obviously meant much to them.

The sermon on human depravity emphasized the plague of sin that affects man "from the sole of the foot even unto the head." (With regard to "man," it should be noted that *hermanos* alone figured in the pastoral greeting, and males dominated the liturgical leadership roster by a ratio of seventeen to zero.) The topic unfolded as key proof texts were linked. Problem: "For all have sinned"; "The wages of sin is death"; "The stain of guilt is ever before me." Solution: "There is no other name whereby we might have saved"; "What must I do to be saved?" "Repent and be baptized."

The pastor presented six persons for baptism by immersion, quizzing each candidate on every point of the baptismal vow and inviting verbal attestation to these propositions of faith as witnessed by the congregation. Following the baptism, the pastor invited "any who wished to join God's true church" to come forward. Fifty persons—one-tenth of those gathered for worship—surged forward and were embraced by congregational elders.

Robust countenances and shining eyes evidenced a newly felt sense of cleansing, release, and reconciliation. As congregants exited the narthex, a "right hand of fellowship" extended by designated greeters deepened the spirit of belonging, a sense of bonding experienced by long-standing congregational members no less than initiates and would-be initiates.

The order of service was virtually identical to that in Main Street, Iowa, which made it easy to follow for study tour participants whose grandparents or great grandparents had homesteaded on the Great Plains. Furthermore, most persons in our group were familiar with the songs, since the hymns had been lifted directly from the North American hymnbook with translated lyrics that bore the names of Kirkpatrick, Smith, and Larson.

Yet a good number of the participants expressed concern with what they perceived as an imported liturgy, a narrow definition of sin, a lack of a social consciousness, a marked exclusiveness, and an attitude of triumphalism. Some also criticized what they perceived as a "doctrinal dress down in which the pastor appeared to have all twenty something doctrines nailed down for eternity and once and for all delivered to the saints with true believer certainty."

"On the other hand," countered one tour participant from Europe who had experienced a bleak post-civil war period prior to World War II, "how much do those raised in peaceful suburbs of Southern California know of *uncertainty*—and hence such may be less than authoritative on the subject of certainty!"

This participant went on to note that "populations in El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1970s share much with those of us who inherited the uncertainty and disillusionment that follow a divisive civil war. These included empty stomachs, ideologically split communities, neighbors arrested in the middle of the night, horrible torture, and family members executed strictly on the basis of ideology."

The participant continued: "The flower that blooms amid the rubble of Picasso's *Guernica*, painted in response to the horror wrought by Nazi aerial bombings of civilians in a town by the same name, is a call for hope in the face of chaos." She continued: "And these newly baptized members and other congregants experience community and experience hope."

The participant admitted that the gloss presented in the morning sermon offered symbols of eternity that appear

fixed and final, but also contended that such rigid categories will be redefined and recast by new members in time. Accordingly, she argued, "this congregation offers members more than fixed symbols of eternity: it offers stability, nurture, socialization, schooling, and access to life chances as well."

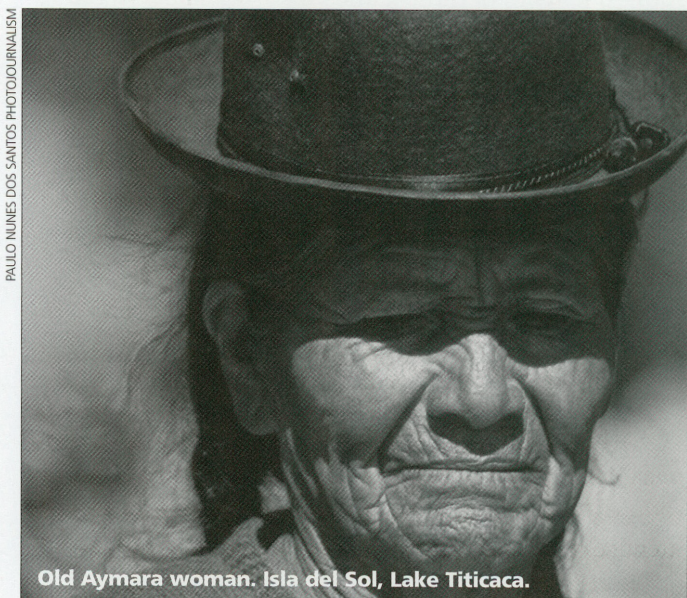
Can hope, community, salvation, and liberation be experienced in more than one way?

During the early 1980s, our tour participants held sessions with various groups asked to "unpack" the following terms: *word*, *salvation*, *church*, and *evangelism*. These sessions occurred in contexts as diverse as a medical missionary clinic on the coast of Guatemala, a Catholic Base Christian Community comprised of priest and people living in a city slums, the manicured campus of an evangelical seminary in a Mexico City suburb, an agricultural project in Belize, a cathedral courtyard in Southern Mexico, and a chapel in Guatemala's highlands.

WORD In a suburban classroom, evangelists offered a schematic in which *word* occurs as Infallible Word (God) becomes Inerrant word (Bible) and, in turn, is propagated to the masses. "God wants to be understood and God has communicated his word through the Holy Bible. The Bible is absolute; it is one; it is constant; it is consistent; and it is simple," said an evangelist. "Man's central problem is that that he is more concerned with words than with *the* word. Our students can be very direct in giving God's word to the masses," he continued. "They regularly take megaphones to city square and announce 'Listen to the word of God! The word of God! 'I will heal this land!'"

Three Catholic sisters of the Maryknoll Order who lived and worked in a Mexico City slum offered a very different understanding of *word*. "Our understanding is that the word of God is the manifestation of God-ness in history," one asserted. "This word of God is thus not something objective and absolute on India paper with gilded edges, bound in a leather cover, and standing apart from history."

Although the Bible does record the manifestation of God in history as prophets and people heard and responded in history, to limit God's word to the Bible is to limit the ongoing presence of a God in history. In



Old Aymara woman. Isla del Sol, Lake Titicaca.

PAULO NUNES DOS SANTOS PHOTOJOURNALISM



Fernando Stahl (left) and Manuel Camacho (center)

short, they asserted, "God did not stop calling to us with John's Apocalypse letter to the seven churches, for God continues to speak God's word in history—and to demand from us a response in history."

SALVATION A leading evangelist contemplated the meaning of sin and salvation. Sin is separation from God. Salvation is reconciliation with God. All have sinned. The wages of sin is death. But salvation is the free gift of God to those who believe. By accepting Christ, the believer is justified, forgiven, delivered, regenerated. "Four spiritual laws make clear the dynamics of salvation: (1) God loves you; (2) man is sinful; (3) Jesus Christ is God's only provision for sin; and (4) we must individually receive Jesus as Savior and Lord."

The evangelist concluded with a biblical text, "There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." In this manner, individuals experience salvation.

Two lay Catholic missionaries active in nurturing grass-

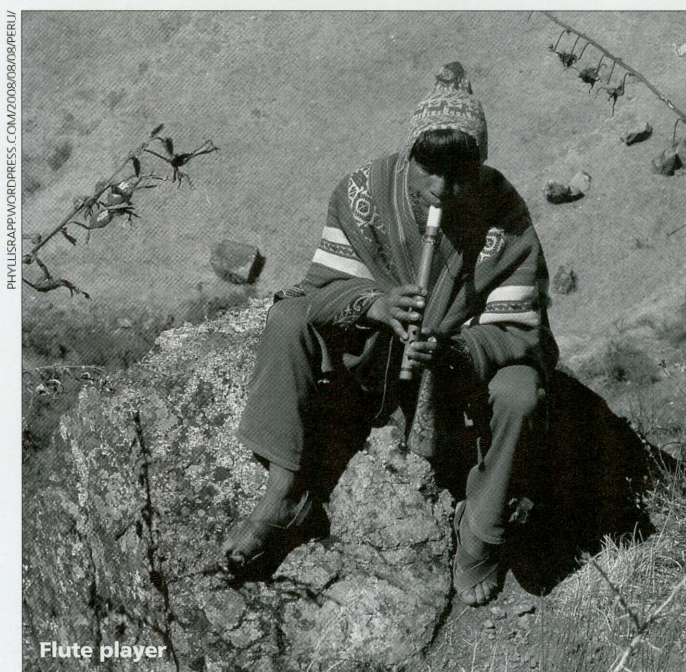
roots study/action groups known as Base Christian Communities contended that salvation only includes not only confession of belief/orthodoxies, but also engagement in practice/orthopraxis. They cited the biblical passage, "Not everyone who says unto me the 'Lord! Lord!' will enter into the kingdom of heaven."

To experience salvation and to accept Christ as Lord, they noted, is to experience wholeness as individual persons and to call for this wholeness to be fostered by institutions in God's world. "Sin, no less than salvation," they argued, must always be seen in these larger contexts, in addition to personal contexts.

CHURCH In the corporate headquarters of a prominent evangelist missionary society, church was succinctly defined: "Church is made up of people called out of the world to save individuals from destruction: the kingdom is extended as the church ministers to the needs of these called out people."

A religious lay worker, adept at introducing North Americans to the Central American experience, defined church in a manner that contrasted markedly with that of the evangelists: Although the church will mediate salvation and healing to lost souls, it does not follow that the church exists to call people out of the world. Rather,

the church is called to be a gathered community commissioned to operationalize the visible presence of God in the world—the very world that God so loved. The church will thus minister to individual souls: the church will no less call for justice and righteousness to be embedded in the warp and woof of the temporal order.



Flute player

EVANGELISM In a Central American evangelistic center, an evangelist noted that evangelism, or the propagation of the gospel, is articulated precisely in Matthew's Great Commission: "Go, teach, baptize." The evangelist continued by observing: "Lamentably, many Christians in Latin America have experienced great confusion with regard to the Great Commission." Some misguided Christians would extend the kingdom by advocating social, political, and economic causes. Some lead out in student protests; some argue for workers' rights; some march against governments.

According to him, however, Matthew's commission leaves little doubt about the nature of evangelism. Accordingly, "through tract distribution, one-to-one evangelistic contacts, and mass meetings, our organization is saving ten souls per minute throughout 1980 in Central America

alone." The evangelist shared another statistic: In South Korea, evangelistic techniques have been so finely honed that a soul is saved for less than one U.S. dollar.

A lay missionary exiled from Chile emphatically countered the evangelist's contention: "The purpose of evangelization is not only to save individual persons, but also to save persons who live in local and national communities." To evangelize is not only to teach; to evangelize is to act. The liberationist concluded: "Our call is to announce the good news of the gospel and also to enact this good news!"

"The ultimate proof that the Lord is living is to live the Lord's life," he continued, "and this living of the Lord's life is witnessed not only in how we live our individual lives but in how we live our lives institutionally in community as well." To evangelize is thus to engage in social transformation outreach endeavors no less than in personal transformation endeavors.

From the late 1980s, these field experiences have included more than two dozen tours to Peru's Andes and Amazon as students and community participants follow in the footsteps of pioneer Adventist missionaries Fernando and Ana Stahl.

Interviews with the likes of theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, eminent historian and National Library director José Tamayo Herrera, former minister of health David Tehada, and veteran Maryknoll priest Esteban Judd Zanon suggest that the answer to the question, "Were the Stahls evangelists or liberationists?" must emphatically elicit a simple Yes! It is clear that their witness mediated salvation in the form of challenging unjust social structures no less than fostering the assurance of salvation to thousands of individuals.

It is equally clear that their witness contributed to vast social change as the privileged position of the social elite of Peru's Lake Titicaca basin, who comprised 8 percent of the population, was effectively challenged when the Stahls initiated the first indigenous and coeducational system of schools in the vast Peruvian highlands. Their initiative is recognized as a sweeping evangelizing/liberating action and lauded by dozens of investigators on three continents.

Chapters from Fernando Stahl's *In the Land of the Incas* come alive as tour members enter the Stahl home on the shores of Lake Titicaca; cruise in a *titora* reed boat among Lake Titicaca's "floating islands"; pause at the Inca Trail's Sun Gate entrance to view the wonders of Machu Picchu;

look at Cusco's pre-Inca, Inca, and Christian monuments; and take a meal at the Ana Stahl Clinic on the banks of the Amazon River.⁴

The penultimate experience comes from delivering medicines to Amazon clinics and distributing school supplies to great, great, great grandchildren of thousands whom "Mother" Ana Stahl birthed on these banks. The ultimate experience comes from relaxing for the first time on the tour, basking in a swinging hammock at an Amazon lodge.

While evaluating the Religious Left and Right, the least responsible approach is to resort to bumper sticker assertions like "The Religious Right Is Neither," or "The Left Shall Be Left." Neither is constructive, nor are generalizations that merely pit otherworldly, soul-saving evangelists against this-worldly, structures-saving liberationists. Such approaches wrongly assume that the lines are uniformly and clearly drawn.

Tours of the schools, orphanages, clinics, and agricultural projects run by the evangelists demonstrate that complete otherworldliness is rarely the case. Nor are these humanitarian endeavors simply holdovers from a colonial missionary past in which "first world" models are imposed on indigenous populations with no sensitivity to cultural settings.

One case in point is an inpatient clinic run by evangelicals in rural Central America. In a culture where values place priority on the presence of kinship groups during illness, the clinic architecture boasts a roof with twelve-foot eaves that allow the extended family to settle in—complete with open fire, bedrolls, and *tortillas con frijoles*.

Conversely, it is unfair to picture proponents of liberation theology as materialistic Marxists devoid of any notion of the transcendent. One member of a Catholic religious order who takes her medical expertise to Indian villages in the Central American highlands cited the theology of liberation as grounds for her service. Upon being asked where she, a Maryknoll Order sister and physician, finds the resources to give of herself so unconditionally to a vocation that makes such tremendous physical and emotional demands, she lowered her eyes and paused.

The pause did not signify she was groping for a response. Rather, the question had touched something very personal and private: "My pilgrimage of faith has always been made in the context of Christian community," she

asserted. "It is a community of prayer, a community of worship, and a community of action." Then she added: "In my case, it is through prayer and worship in community that one finds the strength for action—for keeping on."

The illustrations given above should not conceal differences between the groups. Our definition sessions suggested that when evangelists present their presuppositions and definitions they tend to emphasize transcendence/piety/individualism, whereas liberationists accentuate immanence/action/communalism. When pushed by questioners, however, each side often offered qualifications that implicitly or explicitly recognized the incompleteness of these generalizations. Yet these evangelists and liberationists rarely appear to be talking to—let alone working closely with—one another.

One measure of the extent to which the evangelists, for example, have defined Catholicism to be outside the rank of Christianity is a printed prayer request posted in one of Mexico's evangelical prayer chapels: "Pray that Mexico will one day be converted; the country is 98 percent Catholic." In short, evangelists tend to dismiss liberationists as irreverent and liberationists tend to dismiss evangelicals as irrelevant. Such exclusiveness on both sides serves only to heighten extremes that might be tempered were evangelists and liberationists engaged in the sticky business of dialogue.

RHETORIC Neither side has a monopoly on code terms and slogans. Numerous terms go undefined and are left hanging. Evangelists tend glibly to employ undefined yet value-laden terms that range from God-talk "propitiation" to political-talk "socialism" and "communism." The liberationists' "struggle" against "oppression" and appeal for "solidarity" against "neo-imperialism" at times remains diffuse and less than focused. In a setting where definitions tend to go begging, exchange—and therefore growth—appears stunted.

BIBLE Evangelists quote Bible texts eagerly, but appear to slight biblical theology. Just as truth may elude a plethora of "facts," so the systematic articulation of biblical themes may well escape the blitz of proof texts. In contrast, liberationists often appear to score well on selected theological themes (the Exodus and the Cross being central) while exhibiting minimal Bible knowledge. Religious leaders of a Base Christian Community demonstrated little knowledge of the creation narrative, even though the lesson for the



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week was based on that Scripture passage. Evangelists no less than Liberationists might benefit from a more systematic approach to the biblical text and to biblical theology through a conversation in which each listens to the other.

SALVATION Evangelists find it far easier to cite statistics on those “saved” than to deal systematically with the meaning of salvation for persons and persons-in-community. When questioned for examples of “social sin,” the best one baffled Central American evangelist could offer was a vague reference to student demonstrations in Korea. Although liberationists can handily list many illustrations of social sin, some still appear to wrestle with sin and salvation at a personal level.

In response to a question on how a local rancher might participate in “personal sin,” one liberationist concluded that he might sin in oppressing his wife by not equally dividing the profits accrued through their jointly held family enterprise. Perhaps the notation of sin and salvation would be sharpened by mutual participation in exercises that allow for development of working definitions.

POLITICS *Naïveté* is a term commonly applied to most religionists’ awareness of the political order. Central American evangelists who claim to be “above” politics clearly qualify for this designation. In the ebb and flow of social and political change, no one has the option of being above politics. An act so simple as teaching an indigenous family in the highlands of Guatemala to grow corn more efficiently can be a political act. How? The father no longer needs to do migrant labor on large ranches in the lowlands two months each year.

This robs coastal landowners of their cheap labor pool, challenges the economic status quo, and has resulted in agriculturalists (as well as priests, physicians, teachers, and others) being marked by death squads. Individuals who have given presentations to our groups have witnessed this reality. It is not possible to stop the world and let the evangelist off.

Likewise, liberationists also risk exposing their naïveté. An ever-present temptation, fully recognized by some yet hardly perceived by others, is to identify the Kingdom of God with a given political party or economic system. Instead of being in a position to critique that system, the

Continued on page 77...

community of faith may become co-opted by it. All "isms" may represent, at best, only temporary steps toward the Kingdom, taken within a very provisional order.

The only absolute order for those who seek first the Kingdom is the far distant one. At this particular moment, that transcendent order calls us to read signs of the times with a discerning eye in an unencumbered manner to witness to that which God has declared will be. As the Cuenavaca bishop cautioned: "When the community of faith reduces the Kingdom of God to any 'ism' of humankind, it loses its capacity to perform the critical prophetic function entrusted to it."

2008 POSTSCRIPT ON GAP CLOSING It should be pointed out that evangelicals of the twenty-first century—perhaps having taken a page from such socially conscious evangelist colleagues as Jim Wallis, Tony Campolo, and Ron Sider—are currently embracing programs that take salvation well beyond the personal realm.⁵ Witness heightened evangelical involvement in environmental concerns, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and prolife definitions that go well beyond a traditional anti-abortion stance.

No less personage than the "father of liberation theology," Gustavo Gutiérrez, praises the work of Fernando and Ana Stahl for the manner in which they combined personal transformation and social transformation: "In the face of severe injustice, suffering, and oppression, the Stahls identified with the poorest of the poor and incarnated the gospel in ways which profoundly impacted the spiritual, social, economic, and political life of the Peruvian highlands."

Gutiérrez echoes the endorsement of fellow progressive Catholic priest Estéban Judd Zannon, who reintroduced this author to the Stahl story almost two decades ago. At that time, he declared with enthusiasm, "The Stahls are our spiritual forbears." He went on to note that the Stahls "incarnated" the gospel not merely in churches and chapels, but also in clinics, health education programs, in open markets, and—above all—in establishing the first coeducational and indigenous education in the Peruvian highlands. Recall the priest's conclusion, delivered with a drum roll flourish: "The Stahls were missionaries, visionaries, and revolutionaries!"

2008 PERSONAL POSTSCRIPT I was raised in parochial Loma Linda, California, during the 1950s. Dwight D. Eisenhower

was in the White House and all was well with the world. This was a Loma Linda of orange groves and void of freeways, minorities, or sin. *Leave it to Beaver* portrayed the promise of an idyllic family life to families of that unincorporated town who had rationalized the virtues of television. Our local populous avoided public policy issues to the extent that its citizens eschewed voting—until John F. Kennedy ran for the U.S. presidency.

Personal rewards garnered from participating in these international study tours include the privilege of meeting a wide variety of people, gaining insights from seeing new corners of the world, and experiencing new takes on religion and public policy. Additional rewards, some discussed earlier, include visiting such sites as the vast Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City, with its thousands of artifacts; learning about different cosmologies while watching the sun set and/or rise at Mexico's Chitizén Itzá pyramid and Peru's incomparable Machu Picchu; and touring the Cathedral in Cusco while witnessing the syncretism that emerges as cultures connect.

The rewards also include sailing Lake Titicaca en route to worshiping with an Adventist congregation, standing at the Stahl statue in Plateria on the lake's shores, and cruising the mighty Amazon, along which Ana Stahl delivered thousands of babies. Then there is the excitement of hearing firsthand from informed academics within and beyond the community of faith, no less than from professors and peasants who have experienced salvation, in part, through the witness of evangelists as well as liberationists. Even from evangelists cum liberationists?

But the most valued reward comes in the form of comments by students and community participants who echo the gist of the following sentence: "On this study tour, God, God's church, and God's world have grown bigger for me."

The sociology of religion suggests that the tension that arises between withdrawing evangelist types and the social engineering liberationist types is an ever-present reality. As a sociological phenomenon, the Christian church faces in each generation the paradox of the evangelists' demand for the sanctification of the self through a witness to the gospel that demands detachment from the world and the liberationists' demand that puts hands and feet on such terms as justice and righteousness in an effort to face down

the tensions and struggles manifest in the external order.

Evangelist types tend to caution that the religious community is to function as a colony of heaven, and thus remain unspotted from the world and save persons from it, whereas liberationist types tend to assert that the roles of salt of the earth and the light of the world demand individual and social commitment to the world that God so loved as expressed through endeavors of social transformation.

The evangelist cautions against false doctrines that lead to accommodation. The liberationist counters that calls proclaiming good news to the poor, release of the captives, sight for the blind, and liberty for the oppressed inform a platform that may find guidance as directly from the Gospel of Mark (read Luke, Isaiah, and Amos) as from the philosophy of Marx.

Ernst Troeltsch suggests that there will always be a historical sea saw as church types compromise with culture to embrace the world and as sect types resist such compromise. Might conditions exist in which evangelist and liberationist types find sufficient space for an ongoing dialogue from which a "prophetic remnant" type might emerge? ■

Notes and References

1. Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1973).
2. Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols., trans. Olive Wyon (New York: Harper and Row, 1960). Troeltsch is credited with plowing the first substantial sociological ground in laying out and drawing upon "ideal type" analysis to examine the relationship between religious communities and the social order. The "sect" type organization tends to evolve toward "church type" organization, the "prophet type" leadership tends to evolve toward the "priest type" leadership, and the "charismatic type" authority tends to evolve toward the "bureaucratic type" authority.
3. Charles Teel, "The Radical Roots of Peruvian Adventism," *Spectrum* 21.1 (Dec. 1990):5-18; and Charles Teel, "Revolutionary Missionaries in Peru; Fernando and Anna Stahl," *Spectrum* 18.3 (Feb. 1988):50-52.
4. Ferdinand Anthony Stahl, *In the Land of the Incas* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1920).
5. Examples include: Jim Wallis, *Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 2005); Jim Wallis, *The Great Awakening: Reviving Faith and Politics in a Post-Religious Right America* (New York: Harper One, 2008); Tony Campolo, *Wake Up America!: Answering God's Radical Call While Living in the Real World* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991); and Ron Sider, *Evangelicals and Development: Toward a Theology of Social Change* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982).

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shown to consist of a series of physical phenomena with no evidence for a decision point where the brain can exercise free will. There is no evidence pointing toward René Descartes' "soul" living in the pineal gland, which makes free choices. There is no President George W. Bush within our brains declaring, "I am the decider."

Let's pause here to make sure we are clear on what we are NOT discussing.

1. This is not the question of whether our behavior is based up genetics or environment—nature versus nurture. As mentioned before, the answer to that is a resounding, Both! Neuroscientists are finding evidence that our genetics play a greater role than we usually suspect. However, all cognitive and behavioral phenomena appear to result from one or the other with no apparent role for "free will."
2. This is not a question of whether scientific thinking is superior to other forms of thought or truth, such as poetry or philosophy. The neurophysiology of all thought is based on physical processes of the brain. The brain is the mind. Seventh-day Adventists, as monists, have been saying that for more than a century; we may not have always fully realized the implications.
3. This is not a question of whether the brain can grow or come up with novel thoughts. Once again, the answer is a resounding, Yes! However, novel thoughts are the result of the brain reacting to its genetic and environmental cues through the strengthening of certain circuits and the dying away of other circuits based, once again, on physics. Neurons do not "decide" which direction to grow or when to initiate cell death (apoptosis). These are based on genetic "programs" and environmental cues. Yet novel thoughts occur as a result of genetic and environmental interactions.

The thought that neuroscientists have lost our minds disturbs even those who subscribe to it. Science writer John Horgan writes in a *New York Times* opinion piece, "Free will is something I cherish. I can live with the idea of science killing off God. But free will? That's going too far."⁷ Postmodern thinkers find it acceptable that neurobiology explains Jane Seymour's near-death experience as a result of activation of the right angular-